A WOMAN-HATER

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A WOMAN-HATER

BY

CHARLES READE, D.C.L.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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A WOMAN-HATER.

CHAPTER I.

The "Golden Star," Homburg, was a humble hotel, not used by gay gamblers, but by modest travellers.

At two o'clock, one fine day in June, there were two strangers in the *salle à manger*, seated at small tables a long way apart, and wholly absorbed in their own business.

One was a lady, about twenty-four years old, who, in the present repose of her features, looked comely, sedate, and womanly, but not the remarkable person she really was. Her forehead high and white, but a little broader than sculptors affect. Her long hair, coiled tight, in a great many smooth snakes, upon her

snowy nape, was almost flaxen, yet her eyebrows and long lashes not pale but a reddish brown. Her grey eyes, large and profound; her mouth rather large, beautifully shaped, amiable, and expressive, but full of resolution; her chin a little broad; her neck and hands admirably white and polished. She was an Anglo-Dane,—her father English.

If you ask me what she was doing, why—hunting; and had been for some days, in all the inns of Homburg. She had the visitors' book, and was going through the names of the whole year, and studying each to see whether it looked real, or assumed. Interspersed were flippant comments, and verses, adapted to draw a smile of amusement or contempt; but this hunter passed them all over as nullities: the steady pose of her head, the glint of her deep eye, and the set of her fine lips, showed a mind not to be diverted from its object.

The traveller at her back had a map of the district, and blank telegrams, one of which he filled in every now and then, and scribbled a hasty letter to the same address. He was a sharp-faced middle-aged man of business; Joseph Ashmead, operatic and theatrical agent—

at his wits' end: a female singer at the Homburg Opera had fallen really ill; he was commissioned to replace her, and had only thirty hours to do it in. So he was hunting a singer. What the lady was hunting can never be known, unless she should choose to reveal it.

Karl, the waiter, felt bound to rouse these abstracted guests, and stimulate their appetites. He affected, therefore, to look on them as people who had not yet breakfasted, and tripped up to Mr Ashmead with a bill of fare, rather scanty.

The busiest Englishman can eat, and Ashmead had no objection to snatch a mouthful; he gave his order in German with an English accent. But the lady, when appealed to, said softly, in pure German, "I will wait for the *table-d'hôte*."

"The *table-d'hôte!* It wants four hours to that."

The lady looked Karl full in the face, and said, slowly, and very distinctly, "Then, I—will —wait—four—hours."

These simple words, uttered firmly, and in a contralto voice of singular volume and sweetness, sent Karl skipping; but their effect on Mr Ashmead was more remarkable: he started up

from his chair with an exclamation, and bent his eyes eagerly on the melodious speaker. He could only see her back hair and her figure; but, apparently, this quick-eared gentleman had also quick eyes, for he said aloud in English—"Her hair, too—it must be;" and he came hurriedly towards her. She caught a word or two, and turned, and saw him. "Ah!" said she, and rose, but the points of her fingers still rested on the book.

"It is!" cried Ashmead. "It is!"

"Yes, Mr Ashmead," said the lady, colouring a little, but in pure English, and with a composure not easily disturbed; "it is Ina Klosking."

"What a pleasure!" cried Ashmead; "and what a surprise! Ah, madam, I never hoped to see you again. When I heard you had left the Munich Opera so sudden, I said, 'There goes one more bright star, quenched for ever.' And you to desert us; you, the risingest singer in Germany!"

"Mr Ashmead!"

"You can't deny it. You know you were."

The lady, thus made her own judge, seemed to reflect a moment, and said, "I was a well-

grounded musician, thanks to my parents. I was a very hard-working singer; and I had the advantage of being supported, in my early career, by a gentleman of judgment and spirit, who was a manager at first, and brought me forward, afterwards a popular agent, and talked managers into a good opinion of me."

"Ah, madam," said Ashmead, tenderly, "it is a great pleasure to hear this from you, and spoken with that mellow voice, which would charm a rattlesnake; but what would my zeal and devotion have availed, if you had not been a born singer?"

"Why—yes," said Ina, thoughtfully; "I was a singer." But she seemed to say this, not as a thing to be proud of, but only because it happened to be true; and, indeed, it was a peculiarity of this woman, that she appeared nearly always to think — if but for half a moment — before she spoke, and to say things, whether about herself or others, only because they were the truth. The reader, who shall condescend to bear this in mind, will possess some little clue to the colour and effect of her words as spoken. Often, where they seem simple and common-place, on paper, they were weighty by their extraordinary air of

truthfulness, as well as by the deep music of her mellow, bell-like voice.

"Oh, you do admit that," said Mr Ashmead, with a chuckle: "then why jump off the ladder, so near the top? Oh, of course I know—the old story; but you might give twenty-two hours to love, and still spare a couple to music."

"That seems a reasonable division," said Ina, naïvely. "But (apologetically) he was jealous."

"Jealous!—more shame for him. I'm sure no lady in public life was ever more discreet."

"No, no; he was only jealous of the public."

"And what had the poor public done?"

"Absorbed me, he said."

"Why, he could take you to the opera, and take you home from the opera, and, during the opera, he could make one of the public, and applaud you as loud as the best."

"Yes, but rehearsals!—and—embracing the Tenor."

"Well, but only on the stage?"

"Oh, Mr Ashmead, where else does one embrace the Tenor?"

"And was that a grievance? Why, I'd embrace fifty Tenors—if I was paid proportionable."

"Yes, but he said I embraced one poor stick,

with a fervour—an *abandon*—Well, I daresay I did; for, if they had put a gate-post in the middle of the stage, and it was in my part to embrace the thing, I should have done it honestly, for love of my art, and not of a post. The next time I had to embrace the poor stick, it was all I could do not to pinch him savagely."

"And turn him to a counter-tenor—make him squeak."

Ina Klosking smiled, for the first time. Ashmead, too, chuckled at his own wit, but turned suddenly grave the next moment, and moralised. He pronounced it desirable, for the interests of mankind, that a great and rising singer should not love out of the business; outsiders were wrong-headed, and absurd, and did not understand the true artist. However, having discoursed for some time in this strain, he began to fear it might be unpalatable to her; so he stopped abruptly, and said, "But there—what is done is done. We must make the best of it: and you mustn't think I meant to run *him* down. He loves you, in his way. He must be a noble fellow, or he never could have won such a heart as yours. He won't be jealous of an old fellow like me, though I love you too, in my humdrum way,

and always did. You must do me the honour to present me to him at once."

Ina stared at him: but said nothing.

"Oh," continued Ashmead, "I shall be busy till evening; but I will ask him and you to dine with me at the Kursaal, and then adjourn to the Royal Box. You are a Queen of Song, and that is where you and he shall sit, and nowhere else."

Ina Klosking was changing colour all this time, and cast a grateful but troubled look on him. "My kind, old faithful friend!" said she; then shook her head. "No, we are not to dine with you; nor sit together at the opera, in Homburg."

Ashmead looked a little chagrined. "So be it," he said, drily. "But, at least, introduce me to him. I'll try and overcome his prejudices."

"It is not even in my power to do that."

"Oh, I see. I'm not good enough for him," said Ashmead, bitterly.

"You do yourself injustice, and him too," said Ina, courteously.

"Well, then?"

"My friend," said she, deprecatingly, "he is not here."

"Not here? That is odd. Well, then, you will be dull till he comes back. Come without him; at all events, to the opera."

She turned her tortured eyes away. "I have not the heart."

This made Ashmead look at her more attentively. "Why, what is the matter?" said he. "You are in trouble. I declare you are trembling, and your eyes are filling. My poor lady — in Heaven's name, what is the matter?"

"Hush!" said Ina; "not so loud." Then she looked him in the face a little while, blushed, hesitated, faltered, and at last laid one white hand upon her bosom, that was beginning to heave, and said, with patient dignity, "My old friend—I—am—deserted."

Ashmead looked at her with amazement and incredulity: "Deserted!" said he, faintly; "you —deserted!!!"

"Yes," said she, "deserted;—but perhaps not for ever." Her noble eyes filled to the brim, and two tears stood ready to run over.

"Why, the man must be an idiot!" shouted Ashmead.

"Hush! not so loud. That waiter is listening: let me come to your table."

She came and sat down at his table, and he sat opposite her. They looked at each other. He waited for her to speak. With all her fortitude, her voice faltered, under the eye of sympathy.

"You are my old friend," she said; "I will try and tell you all." But she could not all in a moment, and the two tears trickled over, and ran down her cheeks; Ashmead saw them, and burst out, "The villain!—the villain!"

"No, no," said she, "do not call him that. I could not bear it. Believe me, he is no villain." Then she dried her eyes, and said, resolutely, "If I am to tell you, you must not apply harsh words to him. They would close my mouth at once; and close my heart."

"I won't say a word," said Ashmead, submissively; "so tell me all."

Ina reflected a moment, and then told her tale. Dealing now with longer sentences, she betrayed her foreign half.

"Being alone so long," said she, "has made me reflect more than in all my life before, and I now understand many things that, at the time,

I could not. He, to whom I have given my love, and resigned the art in which I was advancing—with your assistance—is, by nature, impetuous and inconstant. He was born so; and I the opposite. His love for me was too violent to last for ever in any man, and it soon cooled in him, because he is inconstant by nature. He was jealous of the public: he must have all my heart, and all my time, and so he wore his own passion out. Then his great restlessness, having now no chain, became too strong for our happiness. He pined for change, as some wanderers pine for a fixed home. Is it not strange? I, a child of the theatre, am, at heart, domestic. He, a gentleman and a scholar, born, bred, and fitted to adorn the best society, is, by nature, a Bohemian."

"One word: is there another woman?"

"No, not that I know of; Heaven forbid!" said Ina. "But there is something very dreadful: there is gambling. He has a passion for it, and I fear I wearied him by my remonstrances. He dragged me about from one gambling-place to another, and I saw that if I resisted he would go without me. He lost a fortune whilst we were together, and I do really believe he is ruined, poor dear."

Ashmead suppressed all signs of ill-temper, and asked, grimly, "Did he quarrel with you?"

"Oh no, he never said an unkind word to me: and I was not always so forbearing; for I passed months of torment. I saw that affection, which was my all, gliding gradually away from me, and the tortured will cry out. I am not an ungoverned woman, but sometimes the agony was intolerable, and I complained. Well, that agony, I long for it back; for now I am desolate."

"Poor soul!—How could a man have the heart to leave you? how could he have the face?"

"Oh, he did not do it shamelessly. He left me for a week, to visit friends in England. But he wrote to me from London. He had left me at Berlin. He said that he did not like to tell me, before parting, but I must not expect to see him for six weeks; and he desired me to go to my mother, in Denmark. He would send his next letter to me there. Ah! he knew I should need my mother when his second letter came. He had planned it all, that the blow might not kill me. He wrote to tell me he was a ruined man, and he was too proud to let me support him: he begged my pardon for his love, for his desertion, for ever having crossed my brilliant

path like a dark cloud. He praised me, he thanked me, he blessed me; but he left me. It was a beautiful letter; but it was the death-warrant of my heart. I was abandoned."

Ashmead started up and walked very briskly, with a great appearance of business requiring vast despatch, to the other end of the *salle;* and there, being out of Ina's hearing, he spoke his mind to a candlestick with three branches. "D—n him! Heartless, sentimental scoundrel; d—n him! D—n him!"

Having relieved his mind with this pious ejaculation, he returned to Ina at a reasonable pace and much relieved; and was now enabled to say cheerfully, "Let us take a business view of it. He is gone, gone of his own accord. Give him your blessing—I have *given* him mine—and forget him."

"Forget him! Never while I live. Is that your advice? Oh, Mr Ashmead! And the moment I saw your friendly face, I said to myself, 'I am no longer alone: here is one that will help me.'"

"And so I will, you may be sure of that," said Ashmead, eagerly. "What is the business?"

"The business is, to find him. That is the first thing."

"But he is in England."

"Oh no; that was eight months ago. He could not stay eight months in any country; besides, there are no gambling houses there."

"And have you been eight months searching Europe for this madman?"

"No; at first pride and anger were strong, and I said, 'Here I stay till he comes back to me and to his senses.'"

"Brava!"

"Yes; but month after month went by, carrying away my pride and my anger, and leaving my affection undiminished. At last I could bear it no longer; so, as he would not come to his senses——"

"You took leave of yours, and came out on a wild-goose chase," said Ashmead, but too regretfully to affront her.

"It *was*," said Ina; "I feel it. But it is not one *now*, because I have *you* to assist me with your experience and ability. You will find him for me, somehow or other. I know you will."

Let a woman have ever so little guile, she must have tact, if she is a true woman. Now tact, if its etymology is to be trusted, implies a fine sense and power of touch; so, in virtue of

her sex, she pats a horse before she rides him, and a man before she drives him. There, ladies, there is an indictment in two counts; traverse either of them if you can.

Joseph Ashmead, thus delicately but effectually manipulated, swelled with gratified vanity, and said, "You are quite right; you can't do this sort of thing yourself—you want an agent."

"Of course I do."

"Well, you have got one. Now let me see—fifty to one he is not at Homburg at all. If he is he most likely stays at Frankfort. He is a swell, is he not!"

"Swell!" said the Anglo-Dane, puzzled. "Not that I am aware of." She was strictly on her guard against vituperation of her beloved scamp.

"Pooh, pooh!" said Ashmead; "of course he is, and not the sort to lodge in Homburg."

"Then behold my incompetence!" said Ina.

"But *the* place to look for him is the gambling saloon. Been there?"

"Oh no."

"Then you must."

"What!—Me!—Alone?"

"No; with your agent."

"Oh, my friend; I said you would find him."

"What a woman! She will have it he is in Homburg. And suppose we do find him and you should not be welcome?"

"I shall not be unwelcome. *I shall be a change.*"

"Shall I tell you how to draw him to Homburg wherever he is?" said Ashmead, very demurely.

"Yes, tell me that."

"And do *me* a good turn into the bargain."

"Is it possible? can I be so fortunate?"

"Yes; and, *as you say*, it *is* a slice of luck to be able to kill two birds with one stone. Why, consider—the way to recover a man is not to run after him, but to make him run to you: it is like catching moths; you don't run out into the garden after them; you light the candle and open the window, and *they* do the rest—as he will."

"Yes, yes; but what am I to do for *you?*" asked Ina, getting a little uneasy and suspicious.

"What, didn't I tell you?" said Ashmead, with cool effrontery. "Why, only to sing for me in this little opera, that is all." And he put his hands in his pockets, and awaited thunderclaps.

"Oh, that is all, is it?" said Ina, panting a little, and turning two great reproachful eyes on him.

"That is all," said he, stoutly. "Why, what attracted him at first? Wasn't it your singing, the admiration of the public, the bouquets and bravas? What caught the moth once will catch it again—'moping' won't. And surely you will not refuse to draw him, merely because you can pull me out of a fix into the bargain. Look here: I have undertaken to find a singer by to-morrow night; and what chance is there of my getting even a third-rate one? Why, the very hour I have spent so agreeably, talking to you, has diminished my chance."

"Oh," said Ina, "this is *driving* me into your net."

"I own it," said Joseph, cheerfully; "I'm quite unscrupulous, because I know you will thank me afterwards."

"The very idea of going back to the stage makes me tremble," said Ina.

"Of course it does; and those who tremble succeed. In a long experience I never knew an instance to the contrary. It is the conceited fools, who feel safe, that are in danger."

"What is the part?"

"One you know—Siebel in 'Faust,' with two new songs."

"Excuse me, I do not know it."

"Why, everybody knows it."

"You mean everybody has heard it sung. I know neither the music nor the words, and I cannot sing incorrectly even for you."

"Oh, you can master the airs in a day; and the cackle in half an hour."

"I am not so expeditious. If you are serious get me the book — oh, he calls the poet's words the cackle!—and the music of the part directly, and borrow me the score."

"Borrow you the score! Ah! that shows the school you were bred in. I gaze at you with admiration."

"Then please don't, for we have not a moment to waste. You have terrified me out of my senses. Fly!"

"Yes; but before I fly, there is something to be settled—salary!"

"As much as they will give."

"Of course; but give me a hint."

"No, no; you will get me some money, for I am poor; I gave all my savings to my dear

mother, and settled her on a farm in dear old Denmark. But I really sing for *you* more than for Homburg; so make no difficulties. Above all, do not discuss salary with me. Settle it and draw it for me, and let me hear no more about that. I am on thorns."

He soon found the director, and told him, excitedly, there was a way out of his present difficulty. Ina Klosking was in the town. He had implored her to return to the opera. She had refused at first; but he had used all his influence with her, and at last had obtained a half promise on conditions—a two months' engagement, certain parts, which he specified out of his own head; salary, a hundred thalers per night, and a half clear benefit on her last appearance.

The director demurred to the salary.

Ashmead said he was mad; she was the German Alboni, her low notes like a trumpet, and the compass of a mezzo-soprano besides.

The director yielded, and drew up the engagement in duplicate. Ashmead then borrowed the music and came back to the inn triumphant. He waved the agreement over his head, then submitted it to her. She glanced at it, made a wry

face, and said, "Two months! I never dreamed of such a thing."

"Not worth your while to do it for less," said Ashmead. "Come," said he, authoritatively, "you have got a good bargain every way; so sign."

She lifted her head high, and looked at him like a lioness, at being ordered.

Ashmead replied by putting the paper before her and giving her the pen.

She cast one more reproachful glance, then signed like a lamb.

"Now," said she, turning fretful, "I want a piano."

"You shall have one," said he, coaxingly. He went to the landlord and inquired if there was a piano in the house.

"Yes, there is one," said he.

"And it is mine," said a sharp female voice.

"May I beg the use of it?"

"No," said the lady, a tall, bony spinster. "I cannot have it strummed on and put out of tune by everybody."

"But this is not everybody. The lady I want it for is a professional musician. Top of the tree."

"The hardest strummers going."

"But, mademoiselle, this lady is going to sing

at the opera. She *must* study. She *must* have a piano."

"But (grimly) she need not have mine."

"Then she must leave the hotel."

"Oh (haughtily), *that* is as she pleases."

Ashmead went to Ina Klosking in a rage and told her all this, and said he would take her to another hotel kept by a Frenchman; these Germans were bears. But Ina Klosking just shrugged her shoulders, and said, "Take me to her."

He did so; and she said in German, "Madam, I can quite understand your reluctance to have your piano strummed. But, as your hotel is quiet and respectable, and I am unwilling to leave it, will you permit me to play to you, and then you shall decide whether I am worthy to stay or not."

The spinster drank those mellow accents; coloured a little, looked keenly at the speaker, and, after a moment's reflection, said, half sullenly, "No, madam, you are polite. I must risk my poor piano. Be pleased to come with me."

She then conducted them to a large unoccupied room on the first floor, and unlocked the piano, a very fine one, and in perfect tune.

Ina sat down, and performed a composition then in vogue.

"You play correctly, madam," said the spinster; "but your music—what stuff! Such things are null. They vex the ear a little, but they never reach the mind."

Ashmead was wroth, and could hardly contain himself; but the Klosking was amused, and rather pleased. "Mademoiselle has positive tastes in music," said she; "all the better."

"Yes," said the spinster, "most music is mere noise. I hate and despise forty-nine compositions out of fifty; but the fiftieth I adore. Give me something simple, with a little soul in it—if you can."

Ina Klosking looked at her, and observed her age and her dress, the latter old-fashioned. She said, quietly, "Will mademoiselle do me the honour to stand before me? I will sing her a trifle my mother taught me."

The spinster complied, and stood erect and stiff, with her arms folded. Ina fixed her deep eyes on her, playing a liquid prelude all the time, then swelled her chest and sang the old Venetian canzonet, "Il pescatore dell' onda." It

is a small thing, but there is no limit to the genius of song. The Klosking sang this trifle with a voice so grand, sonorous, and sweet, and, above all, with such feeling, taste, and purity, that somehow she transported her hearers to Venetian waters, moonlit, and thrilled them to the heart; while the great glass chandelier kept ringing very audibly, so true, massive, and vibrating were her tones in that large empty room.

At the first verse that cross-grained spinster, with real likes and dislikes, put a bony hand quietly before her eyes. At the last, she made three strides, as a soldier marches, and fell all of a piece, like a wooden *mannequin*, on the singer's neck. "Take my piano," she sobbed, "for you have taken the heart out of my body."

Ina returned her embrace, and did not conceal her pleasure. "I am very proud of such a conquest," said she.

From that hour Ina was the landlady's pet. The room and piano were made over to her, and, being in a great fright at what she had undertaken, she studied and practised her part night and day. She made Ashmead call a re-

hearsal next day, and she came home from it wretched and almost hysterical.

She summoned her slave Ashmead; he stood before her with an air of hypocritical submission.

"The Flute was not at rehearsal, sir," said she, severely; "nor the Oboe, nor the Violoncello."

"Just like 'em," said Ashmead, tranquilly.

"The Tenor is a quavering stick. He is one of those who think that an unmanly trembling of the voice represents every manly passion."

"Their name is legion."

"The Soprano is insipid. And they are all imperfect—contentedly imperfect. How can people sing incorrectly? It is like lying."

"That is what makes it so common; he! he!"

"I do not desire wit, but consolation. I believe you are Mephistopheles himself in disguise; for ever since I signed that diabolical compact you made me, I have been in a state of terror, agitation, misgiving, and misery—and I thank and bless you for it; for these thorns and nettles they lacerate me, and make me live. They break the dull lethargic agony of utter desolation."

Then, as her nerves were female nerves, and her fortitude female fortitude, she gave way, for once, and began to cry patiently.

Ashmead the practical went softly away, and left her, as we must leave her for a time, to battle her business with one hand, and her sorrow with the other.

CHAPTER II.

In the Hotel Russie, at Frankfort, there was a grand apartment, lofty, spacious, and richly furnished, with a broad balcony overlooking the Platz, and roofed, so to speak, with coloured sun-blinds, which softened the glare of the Rhineland sun to a rosy and mellow delight.

In the verandah, a tall English gentleman was leaning over the balcony, smoking a cigar, and being courted by a fair young lady; her light-grey eyes dwelt on him in a way to magnetise a man; and she purred pretty nothings at his ear, in a soft tone she reserved for males; her voice was clear, loud, and rather high-pitched whenever she spoke to a person of her own sex: a comely English blonde, with pale eyelashes; a keen, sensible girl, and not a downright wicked one; only born artful. This was Fanny Dover; and the tall gentleman—whose relation she was,

and whose wife she resolved to be in one year, three years, or ten, according to his power of resistance—was Harrington Vizard, a Barfordshire squire, with twelve thousand acres, and a library.

As for Fanny, she had only £2000 in all the world; so compensating Nature endowed her with a fair complexion, grey, mesmeric eyes, art, and resolution—qualities that often enable a poor girl to conquer landed estates, with their male encumbrances.

Beautiful and delicate—on the surface—as was Miss Dover's courtship of her first cousin once removed, it did not strike fire; it neither pleased nor annoyed him; it fell as dead as a lantern firing on an iceberg. Not that he disliked her by any means. But he was thirty-two, had seen the world, and had been unlucky with women. So he was now a *divorcé*, and a declared woman-hater; railed on them, and kept them at arm's length, Fanny Dover included. It was really comical to see with what perfect coolness and cynical apathy he parried the stealthy advances of this cat-like girl, a mistress in the art of pleasing—when she chose.

Inside the room, on a couch of crimson vel-

vet, sat a young lady of rare and dazzling beauty. Her face was a long but perfect oval, pure forehead, straight nose, with exquisite nostrils; coral lips, and ivory teeth. But what first struck the beholder were her glorious dark eyes, and magnificent eyebrows as black as jet. Her hair was really like a raven's dark purple wing.

These beauties, in a stern character, might have inspired awe; the more so as her form and limbs were grand and statuesque for her age; but all was softened down to sweet womanhood by long silken lashes, often lowered, and a gracious face that blushed at a word, blushed little, blushed much, blushed pinky, blushed pink, blushed roseate, blushed rosy; and, I am sorry to say, blushed crimson, and even scarlet, in the course of those events I am about to record, as unblushing as turnip, and cool as cucumber. This scale of blushes arose not out of modesty alone, but out of the wide range of her sensibility. On hearing of a noble deed, she blushed warm approbation; at a worthy sentiment, she blushed heartfelt sympathy. If you said a thing at the fire that might hurt some person at the farthest window, she would blush for fear it should be overheard, and cause pain.

In short, it was her peculiarity to blush readily for matters quite outside herself, and to show the male observer (if any) the amazing sensibility, apart from egotism, that sometimes adorns a young, high-minded woman, not yet hardened by the world.

This young lady was Zoe Vizard, daughter of Harrington's father, by a Greek mother, who died when she was twelve years of age. Her mixed origin showed itself curiously: in her figure and face she was all Greek, even to her hand, which was moulded divinely, but as long and large as befitted her long, grand, antique arm; but her mind was northern; not a grain of Greek subtlety in it. Indeed she would have made a poor hand at dark deceit, with a transparent face, and eloquent blood, that kept coursing from her heart to her cheeks and back again, and painting her thoughts upon her countenance.

Having installed herself, with feminine instinct, in a crimson couch that framed her to perfection, Zoe Vizard was at work—embroidering. She had some flowers, and their leaves, lying near her on a little table, and, with coloured silks, *chenille*, &c., she imitated each

flower and its leaf very adroitly, without a pattern. This was clever, and, indeed, rather a rare talent; but she lowered her head over this work, with a demure, beaming complacency embroidery alone never yet excited without external assistance. Accordingly, on a large stool, or little ottoman, at her feet, but at a respectful distance, sat a young man, almost her match in beauty, though in quite another style. In height about five feet ten, broad-shouldered, clean built, a model of strength, agility, and grace: his face fair, fresh, and healthy-looking; his large eyes hazel; the crisp curling hair on his shapely head a wonderful brown in the mass, but with one thin streak of gold above the forehead, and all the loose hairs glittering golden: a short-clipped moustache saved him from looking too feminine, yet did not hide his expressive mouth: he had white hands, as soft and supple as a woman's, a mellow voice, and a winning tongue. This dangerous young gentleman was gazing softly on Zoe Vizard and purring in her ear; and she was conscious of his gaze, without looking at him, and was sipping the honey, and showed it, by seeming more absorbed in her work than girls ever really are.

Matters, however, had not gone openly very far. She was still on her defence: so, after imbibing his flatteries demurely a long time, she discovered, all in one moment, that they were objectionable. "Dear me, Mr Severne," said she, "you do nothing but pay compliments."

"How can I help it, sitting here?" inquired he.

"There — there," said she: then, quietly, "Does it never occur to you that only foolish people are pleased with flatteries?"

"I have heard that; but I don't believe it. I know it makes me awfully happy whenever you say a kind word of me."

"That is far from proving your wisdom," said Zoe; "and, instead of dwelling on my perfections, which do not exist, I wish you would *tell* me things."

"What things?"

"How can I tell, till I hear them? Well, then, things about yourself."

"That is a poor subject."

"Let me be the judge."

"Oh, there are lots of fellows who are always talking about themselves: let me be an exception."

This answer puzzled Zoe, and she was silent, and put on a cold look. She was not accustomed to be refused anything reasonable.

Severne examined her closely, and saw he was expected to obey her: he then resolved to prepare, in a day or two, an autobiography full of details, that should satisfy Zoe's curiosity, and win her admiration and her love. But he could not do it all in a moment, because his memory of his real life obstructed his fancy. Meantime he operated a diversion. He said, "Set a poor fellow an example. Tell me something about *yourself*—since I have the bad taste, and the presumption, to be interested in you, and can't help it. Did you spring from the foam of the Archipelago? or are you descended from Bacchus and Ariadne?"

"If you want sensible answers, ask sensible questions," said Zoe, trying to frown him down with her black brows; but her sweet cheek would tint itself, and her sweet mouth smile and expose much intercoral ivory.

"Well, then," said he, "I will ask you a prosaic question, and I only hope you won't think it impertinent. How — ever — did such a strangely-assorted party as yours, come to travel

together; and, if Vizard has turned woman-hater, as he pretends, how comes he to be at the head of a female party, who are not *all* of them——," he hesitated.

"Go on, Mr Severne; not all of them, what?" said Zoe, prepared to stand up for her sex.

"Not perfect?"

"That is a very cautious statement, and—there—you are as slippery as an eel, there is no getting hold of you. Well, never mind, I will set you an example of communicativeness, and reveal this mystery hidden as yet from mankind."

"Speak, dread queen; thy servant heareth."

"Ha! ha! ha! Mr Severne, you amuse *me*."

"You only interest *me*," was the soft reply.

Zoe blushed pink, but turned it off. "Then why do you not attend to my interesting narrative, instead of—— Well, then, it began with my asking the dear fellow to take me a tour, especially to Rome."

"You wanted to see the statues of your ancestors, and shame them."

"Much obliged; I was not quite such a goose. I wanted to see the Tiber, and the Colosseum and Trajan's pillar, and the Tarpeian rock, and

the one everlasting city, that binds ancient and modern history together."

She flashed her great eyes on him, and he was dumb. She had risen above the region of his ideas. Having silenced her commentator, she returned to her story. "Well, dear Harrington said 'yes' directly. So then I told Fanny; and she said, 'Oh, do take me with you!' Now, of course I was only too glad to have Fanny; she is my relation, and my friend."

"Happy girl!"

"Be quiet, please. So I asked Harrington to let me have Fanny with us, and you should have seen his face. What! he travel with a couple of us! He—— I don't see why I should tell you what the monster said."

"Oh yes, please do."

"You won't go telling anybody else then?"

"Not a living soul, upon my honour."

"Well, then, he said"—she began to blush like a rose—"that he looked on me as a mere female in embryo; I had not yet developed the vices of my sex. But Fanny Dover was a ripe flirt, and she would set me flirting, and how could he manage the pair? In short, sir, he refused to take us, and gave his reasons, such

as they were, poor dear! Then I had to tell Fanny. Then she began to cry, and told me to go without her. But I would not do that, when I had once asked her. Then she clung round my neck and kissed me, and begged me to be cross and sullen, and tire out dear Harrington."

"That is like her."

"How do you know?" said Zoe, sharply.

"Oh, I have studied her character."

"When, pray?" said Zoe, ironically, yet blushing a little, because her secret meaning was, "You are always at my apron-strings, and have no time to fathom Fanny."

"When I have nothing better to do; when you are out of the room."

"Well, I shall be out of the room very soon, if you say another word."

"And serve me right, too. I am a fool to talk, when you allow me to listen."

"He is incorrigible," said Zoe, pathetically. "Well, then, I refused to pout at Harrington. It is not as if he had no reason to distrust women, poor dear darling! I invited Fanny to stay a month with us; and, when once she was in the house, she soon got over me, and persuaded me to play sad, and showed me how to do it. So

we wore long faces, and sweet resignation, and were never cross, but kept turning tearful eyes upon our victim."

"Ha! ha! How absurd of Vizard to tell you that two women would be too much for one man."

"No, it was the truth; and girls are artful creatures, especially when they put their heads together. But hear the end of all our cunning. One day, after dinner, Harrington asked us to sit opposite him; so we did, and felt guilty. He surveyed us in silence a little while, and then he said: 'My young friends, you have played your little game pretty well, especially you, Zoe, that are a novice in the fine arts compared with Miss Dover.' Histrionic talent ought to be rewarded; he would relent, and take us abroad, on one condition: there must be a chaperon. 'All the better,' said we hypocrites, eagerly; 'and who?'"

"'Oh, a person equal to the occasion—an old maid as bitter against men as ever grapes were sour. She would follow us up-stairs, down-stairs, and into my lady's chamber. She would have an eye at the keyhole by day, and an ear by night, when we went up to bed and talked over

the events of our frivolous day.' In short, he enumerated our duenna's perfections till our blood ran cold; and it was ever so long before he would tell us who it was—Aunt Maitland. We screamed with surprise. They are like cat and dog, and never agree except to differ. We asked an explanation of this strange choice. He obliged us. 'It was not for his gratification he took the old cat, it was for us. She would relieve him of a vast responsibility. The vices of her character would prove too strong for the little faults of ours, which were only volatility, frivolity, flirtation'—I will *not* tell you what he said."

"I seem to hear Harrington talking," said Severne. "What on earth makes him so hard upon women? Would you mind telling me that?"

"Never ask me that question again," said Zoe, with sudden gravity.

"Well, I won't; I'll get it out of him."

"If you say a word to him about it, I shall be shocked and offended."

She was pale and red by turns; but Severne bowed his head with a respectful submission that disarmed her directly. She turned her head

away, and Severne, watching her, saw her eyes fill.

"How is it," said she, thoughtfully, and looking away from him, "that men leave out their sisters, when they sum up womankind? Are not we women too? My poor brother quite forgets he has one woman who will never, never desert nor deceive him; dear, darling fellow!" and with these three last words she rose, and kissed the tips of her fingers, and waved the kiss to Vizard with that free magnitude of gesture which belonged to antiquity: it struck the Anglo-Saxon flirt at her feet with amazement. Not having good enough under his skin to sympathise with that pious impulse, he first stagnated a little while, and then, not to be silent altogether, made his little, stale, commonplace comment on what she had told him. "Why, it is like a novel."

"A very unromantic one," replied Zoe.

"I don't know that. I have read very interesting novels with fewer new characters than this: there's a dark beauty, and a fair, and a duenna with an eagle eye and an aquiline nose."

"Hush!" said Zoe; "that is her room:" and

pointed to a chamber-door that opened into the apartment.

Oh, marvellous female instinct! The duenna in charge was, at that moment, behind that very door, and her eye and her ear at the keyhole, turn about.

Severne continued his remarks, but in a lower voice.

"Then there's a woman-hater and a man-hater: good for dialogue."

Now this banter did not please Zoe; so she fixed her eyes upon Severne, and said, "You forget the principal figure—a mysterious young gentleman who looks nineteen and is twenty-nine, and was lost sight of in England nine years ago. He has been travelling ever since, and wherever he went he flirted; we gather so much, from his accomplishment in the art: fluent, not to say voluble at times, but no egotist; for he never tells you anything about himself, nor even about his family; still less about the numerous *affaires du cœur* in which he has been engaged. Perhaps he is reserving it all for the third volume."

The attack was strong and sudden, but it failed. Severne, within the limits of his experience, was a consummate artist, and this situa-

tion was not new to him. He cast one gently reproachful glance on her, then lowered his eyes to the carpet, and kept them there. "Do you think," said he, in a low dejected voice, "it can be any pleasure to a man to relate the follies of an idle, aimless life—and to you, who have given me higher aspirations, and made me awfully sorry I cannot live my whole life over again? I can't bear to think of the years I have wasted," said he; "and how can I talk to you, whom I reverence, of the past follies I despise? No, pray don't ask me to risk your esteem. It is so dear to me."

Then this artist put in practice a little manœuvre he had learned, of compressing his muscles and forcing a little unwilling water into his eyes. So, at the end of his pretty little speech, he raised two gentle imploring eyes, with half a tear in each of them. To be sure, nature assisted his art for once; he did bitterly regret, but out of pure egotism, the years he had wasted, and wished, with all his heart, he had never known any woman but Zoe Vizard.

The combination of art and sincerity were too much for the guileless and inexperienced Zoe. She was grieved at the pain she had given, and

rose to retire; for she felt they were both on dangerous ground: but, as she turned away, she made a little deprecating gesture, and said softly, "Forgive me."

That soft tone gave Severne courage, and that gesture gave him an opportunity; he seized her hand, murmured, "Angel of goodness!" and bestowed a long, loving kiss on her hand that made it quiver under his lips.

"Oh!" cried Miss Maitland, bursting into the room at the nick of time, yet feigning amazement. Fanny heard the ejaculations, and whipped away from Harrington, into the window. Zoe with no motive but her own coyness had already snatched her hand away from Severne.

But both young ladies were one moment too late. The eagle eye of a terrible old maid had embraced the entire situation, and they saw she had.

Harrington Vizard, Esq., smoked on, with his back to the group. But the rest were a picture: the mutinous face and keen eyes of Fanny Dover, bristling with defence, at the window; Zoe blushing crimson, and newly started away from her too enterprising wooer; and the tall, thin, grim old maid, standing stiff, as sentinel, at the bed-

room door, and gimleting both her charges alternately with steel-grey orbs,—she seemed like an owl, all eyes and beak.

When the chaperon had fixed the situation thoroughly, she stalked erect into the room, and said, very expressively, "I am afraid I disturb you."

Zoe, from crimson, blushed scarlet, and hung her head; but Fanny was ready.

"La! aunt," said she, ironically, and with pertness infinite, "you know you are always welcome. Wherever have you been all this time? We were afraid we had lost you."

Aunt fired her pistol in reply: "I was not far off—most fortunately."

Zoe, finding that, even under crushing circumstances, Fanny had fight in her, glided instantly to her side, and Aunt Maitland opened battle all round.

"May I ask, sir," said she to Severne, with a horrible smile, "what you were doing when I came in?"

Zoe clutched Fanny, and both awaited Mr Severne's reply for one moment with keen anxiety.

"My dear Miss Maitland," said that able young man very respectfully, yet with a sort of cheerful readiness, as if he was delighted at her deigning to question him, "to tell you the truth, I was admiring Miss Vizard's diamond ring."

Fanny tittered; Zoe blushed again at such a fib and such *aplomb*.

"Oh, indeed!" said Miss Maitland; "you were admiring it very close, sir."

"It is like herself—it will bear inspection."

This was wormwood to Miss Maitland. "Even in our ashes live their wonted fires;" and, though she was sixty, she disliked to hear a young woman praised. She bridled, then returned to the attack.

"Next time you wish to inspect it, you had better ask her *to take it off* and show you."

"May I, Miss Maitland?" inquired the ingenuous youth. "She would not think that a liberty?"

His mild effrontery staggered her for a moment, and she glared at him, speechless; but soon recovered, and said, bitterly, "Evidently *not*." With this she turned her back on him rather ungraciously, and opened fire on her own sex.

"Zoe!" (sharply.)

"Yes, aunt," (faintly.)

"Tell your brother—if he can leave off smoking—I wish to speak to him."

Zoe hung her head, and was in no hurry to bring about the proposed conference.

While she deliberated, says Fanny, with vast alacrity, "I'll tell him, aunt."

"Oh, Fanny!" murmured Zoe, in a reproachful whisper.

"All right!" whispered Fanny, in reply, and whipped out on to the balcony. "Here's Aunt Maitland wants to know if you ever leave off smoking;" and she threw a most aggressive manner into the query.

The big man replied, composedly, "Tell her I do—at meals and prayers; but I always *sleep* with a pipe in my mouth—heavily insured!"

"Well, then, you mustn't; for she has something very particular to say to you, when you've done smoking."

"Something particular! That means something disagreeable. Tell her I shall be smoking all day to-day."

Fanny danced into the room and said, "He says he shall be smoking all day *under the circumstances.*"

Miss Maitland gave this faithful messenger the look of a basilisk, and flounced to her own room. The young ladies instantly stepped out on the balcony, and got one on each side of Harrington, with the feminine instinct of propitiation; for they felt sure the enemy would tell, soon or late.

"What does the old cat want to talk to me about?" said Harrington, lazily, to Fanny.

It was Zoe who replied—

"Can't you guess, dear?" said she, tenderly—"our misconduct." Then she put her head on his shoulder, as much as to say, "But we have a more lenient judge here."

"As if I could not see *that* without her assistance," said Harrington Vizard. (Puff!) At which comfortable reply Zoe looked very rueful, and Fanny burst out laughing.

Soon after this, Fanny gave Zoe a look, and they retired to their rooms; and Zoe said she would never come out again, and Fanny must stay with her. Fanny felt sure *ennui* would thaw that resolve in a few hours; so she submitted, but declared it was absurd, and the very way to give a perfect trifle importance.

"Kiss your hand!" said she, disdainfully—"that is nothing. If I were the man, I'd have kissed both your cheeks long before this."

"And I should have boxed your ears and made you cry," said Zoe, with calm superiority.

So she had her way, and the deserted Severne felt dull, but was too good a general to show it: he bestowed his welcome company on Mr Vizard, walked with him, talked with him, and made himself so agreeable, that Vizard, who admired him greatly, said to him, "What a good fellow you are, to bestow your sunshine on me! I began to be afraid those girls had got you, and tied you to their apron-strings altogether."

"Oh no," said Severne; "they are charming: but, after all, one can't do without a male friend; there are so few things that interest ladies. Unless you can talk red-hot religion, you are bound to flirt with them a little. To be sure, they look shy—if you do; but, if you don't——"

"They *are* bored; whereas they only *looked* shy. I know 'em. Call another subject, please."

"Well, I will; but perhaps it may not be so agreeable a one."

"That is very unlikely," said the woman-hater, drily.

"Well, it is Tin. I'm rather short. You see, when I fell in with you at Monaco, I had no idea of coming this way: but meeting with an old college friend—what a tie college is, isn't it? there is nothing like it; when you have been at college with a man, you seem never to wear him out, as you do the acquaintances you make afterwards."

"That is very true," said Vizard, warmly.

"Isn't it? Now, for instance, if I had only known you of late years, I should feel awfully shy of borrowing a few hundreds of you—for a month or two."

"I don't know why you should, old fellow."

"I should, though. But having been at college together makes all the difference. I don't mind telling you that I have never been at Homburg, without taking a turn at the table, and I am grizzling awfully now at not having sent to my man of business for funds."

"How much do you want? that is the only question."

"Glad to hear it," thought Severne. "Well, let me see, you can't back your luck with less than five hundred."

"Well, but we have been out two months; I

am afraid I haven't so much left. Just let me see." He took out his pocket-book, and examined his letter of credit. "Do you want it to-day?"

"Why, yes; I do."

"Well, then, I am afraid you can only have three hundred. But I will telegraph Herries, and funds will be here to-morrow afternoon."

"All right," said Severne.

Vizard took him to the bank, and exhausted his letter of credit; then to the telegraph office, and telegraphed Herries to enlarge his credit at once. He handed Severne the three hundred pounds. The young man's eye flashed, and it cost him an effort not to snatch them and wave them over his head, with joy; but he controlled himself, and took them like twopence halfpenny.

"Thank you, old fellow," said he. Then, still more carelessly, "Like my I O U?"

"As you please," said Vizard, with similar indifference; only real.

After he had got the money, Severne's conversational powers relaxed—short answers—long reveries.

Vizard observed, stopped short, and eyed him.

"I remember something at Oxford, and I am afraid you are a gambler; if you are, you won't be good for much till you have lost that three hundred. It will be a dull evening for me, without you: I know what I'll do—Ill take my hen-party to the opera at Homburg. There are stalls to be got here. I'll get one for you, on the chance of your dropping in."

The stalls were purchased, and the friends returned at once to the hotel, to give the ladies timely intimation. They found Fanny and Zoe seated, rather disconsolate, in the apartment Zoe had formally renounced: at sight of the stall tickets, the pair uttered joyful cries, looked at each other and vanished.

"You won't see *them* any more till dinner-time," said Vizard. "They will be discussing dress, selecting dress, trying dresses, and changing dresses, for the next three hours." He turned round whilst speaking, and there was Severne slipping away to his own bed-room.

Thus deserted on all sides, he stepped into the balcony and lighted a cigar. Whilst he was smoking it he observed an English gentleman with a stalwart figure and a beautiful brown beard, standing on the steps of the hotel.

"Hollo!" said he, and hailed him. "Hy! Uxmoor! is that you?"

Lord Uxmoor looked up, and knew him. He entered the hotel, and the next minute the waiter ushered him into Vizard's sitting-room.

Lord Uxmoor, like Mr Vizard, was a landed proprietor in Barfordshire. The county is large, and they lived too many miles apart to visit; but they met, and agreed, at elections and county business, and had a respect for each other.

Meeting at Frankfort, these two found plenty to say to each other about home; and as Lord Uxmoor was alone, Vizard asked him to dine. "You will balance us," said he: "we are terribly over-petticoated, and one of them is an old maid. We generally dine at the *table-d'hôte*, but I have ordered dinner *here* to-day: we are going to the opera at Homburg. You are not obliged to do that, you know. You are in for a bad dinner, that is all."

"To tell the truth," said Lord Uxmoor, "I don't care for music."

"Then you deserve a statue for not pretending to love it. I adore it, for my part; and I wish I was going alone, for my hens will be sure to cackle *mal apropos*, and spoil some famous

melody with talking about it, and who sang it in London, instead of listening to it, and thanking God for it, in deep silence."

Lord Uxmoor stared a little at this sudden sally, for he was unacquainted with Vizard's one eccentricity, having met him only on county business, at which he was extra rational, and passed for a great scholar. He really did suck good books as well as cigars.

After a few more words, they parted till dinner-time.

Lord Uxmoor came to his appointment, and found his host and Miss Maitland, whom he knew; and he was in languid conversation with them, when a side-door opened, and in walked Fanny Dover, fair and bright, in Cambridge blue, her hair well dressed by Zoe's maid in the style of the day. Lord Uxmoor rose, and received his fair countrywoman with respectful zeal; he had met her once before. She too sparkled with pleasure at meeting a Barfordshire squire with a long pedigree, purse, and beard, three things she admired greatly.

In the midst of this, in glided Zoe, and seemed to extinguish everybody, and even to pale the

lights, with her dark, yet sun-like beauty. She was dressed in a creamy-white satin that glinted like mother-of-pearl, its sheen and glory unfrittered with a single idiotic trimming; on her breast a large diamond cross. Her head was an Athenian sculpture—no chignon, but the tight coils of antiquity; at their side one diamond star sparkled vivid flame, by its contrast with those polished ebon snakes.

Lord Uxmoor was dazzled, transfixed, at the vision, and bowed very low when Vizard introduced him in an off-hand way, saying, "My sister, Miss Vizard—but I daresay you have met her at the county balls."

"I have never been so fortunate," said Uxmoor, humbly.

"I have," said Zoe; "that is, I saw you waltzing with Lady Betty Gore, at the race ball, two years ago."

"What!" said Vizard, alarmed. "Uxmoor, were you waltzing with Lady Betty Gore?"

"You have it on too high an authority for me to contradict."

Finding Zoe was to be trusted as a county chronicle, Vizard turned sharply to her and said, "And was he flirting with her?"

Zoe coloured a little, and said, "Now, Harrington, how can I tell?"

"You little hypocrite," said Vizard, "who can tell better?"

At this retort Zoe blushed high, and the water came into her eys.

Nobody minded that but Uxmoor, and Vizard went on to explain, "That Lady Betty Gore is as heartless a coquette as any in the county, and don't you flirt with her, or you will get entangled."

"You disapprove her," said Uxmoor, coolly; "then I give her up for ever." He looked at Zoe whilst he said this, and felt how easy it would be to resign Lady Betty and a great many more for this peerless creature. He did not mean her to understand what was passing in his mind; he did not know how subtle and observant the most innocent girl is in such matters. Zoe blushed, and drew away from him. Just then Ned Severne came in, and Vizard introduced him to Uxmoor with great geniality and pride. The charming young man was in a black surtout, with a blue scarf, the very tint for his complexion.

The girls looked at one another, and in a

moment Fanny was elected Zoe's agent: she signalled Severne, and when he came to her she said, for Zoe, "Don't you know we are going to the opera at Homburg?"

"Yes, I know," said he; "and I hope you will have a pleasanter evening than I shall."

"You are not coming with us?"

"No," said he, sorrowfully.

"You had better," said Fanny, with a deal of quiet point—more, indeed, than Zoe's pride approved.

"Not if Mr Severne has something more attractive," said she, turning palish and pinkish by turns.

All this went on *sotto voce*, and Uxmoor, out of good breeding, entered into conversation with Miss Maitland and Vizard. Severne availed himself of this diversion, and fixed his eyes on Zoe, with an air of gentle reproach, then took a letter out of his pocket, and handed it to Fanny. She read it and gave it to Zoe.

It was dated from the "Golden Star," Homburg.

"Dear Ned,—I am worse to-day, and all alone. Now and then I almost fear I may not

pull through. But perhaps that is through being so hipped. Do come and spend this evening with me like a good kind fellow.

"Telegraph reply. S. T."

"Poor fellow," said Ned; "my heart bleeds for him."

Zoe was affected by this, and turned liquid and loving eyes on "dear Ned." But Fanny stood her ground. "Go to 'S. T.' to-morrow morning, but don't desert 'Z. V.' and 'F. D.' to-night." Zoe smiled.

"But I have telegraphed," objected Ned.

"Then telegraph again—*not*," said Fanny, firmly.

Now this was unexpected. Severne had set his heart upon *rouge et noir*, but still he was afraid of offending Zoe; and, besides, he saw Uxmoor with his noble beard and brown eyes, casting rapturous glances at her. "Let Miss Vizard decide," said he. "Don't let me be so unhappy as to offend her twice in one day."

Zoe's pride and goodness dictated her answer, in spite of her wishes. She said in a low voice, "Go to your sick friend."

"There," said Severne.

"I hear," said Fanny. "She means 'go;' but you shall repent it."

"I mean what I say," said Zoe, with real dignity. "It is my habit." And the next moment she quietly left the room.

She sat down in her bedroom, mortified and alarmed. What! had it come to this, that she felt her heart turn cold, just because that young man said he could not accompany her—on a single evening! Then first she discovered that it was for him she had dressed, and had for once beautified her beauty—for *him;* that with Fanny she had dwelt upon the delights of the music, but had secretly thought of appearing publicly on *his* arm, and dazzling people by their united and contrasted beauty.

She rose, all of a sudden, and looked keenly at herself in the glass, to see if she had not somehow overrated her attractions. But the glass was reassuring; it told her not one man in a million could go to a sick friend that night, when he might pass the evening by her side, and visit his friend early in the morning.

Tears of mortified vanity were in her eyes: but she smiled through them at the glass; then

dried them carefully, and went back to the dining-room radiant to all appearance.

Dinner was just served, and her brother, to do honour to the new-comer, waved his sister to a seat by Lord Uxmoor. He looked charmed at the arrangement, and showed a great desire to please her, but at first was unable to find good topics. After several timid overtures on his part, she assisted him, out of good-nature. She knew, by report, that he was a very benevolent young man, bent on improving the homes, habits, wages, and comforts of the agricultural poor. She led him to this, and his eyes sparkled with pleasure, and his homely but manly face lighted and was elevated by the sympathy she expressed in these worthy objects. He could not help thinking "What a Lady Uxmoor this would make! She and I and her brother might leaven the county."

And all this time she would not even bestow a glance on Severne. She was not an angel. She had said, "Go to your sick friend;" but she had not said, "I will smart alone—if you *do*."

Severne sat by Fanny, and seemed dejected, but, as usual, polite and charming. She was smilingly cruel; regaled him with Lord Uxmoor's

wealth and virtues, and said he was an excellent match, and all she-Barfordshire pulling caps for him. Severne only sighed; he offered no resistance: and at last she could not go on nagging a handsome fellow who only sighed, so she said, "Well, *there;* I advise you to join us before the opera is over, that is all."

"I will, I will!" said he, eagerly. "Oh, thank you."

Dinner was despatched rather rapidly, because of the opera.

When the ladies got their cloaks and lace scarves to put over their heads coming home, the party proved to be only three, and the tickets five: for Miss Maitland pleaded headache.

On this, Lord Uxmoor said, rather timidly, he should like to go.

"Why, you said you hated music," said Vizard.

Lord Uxmoor coloured. "I recant," said he, bluntly; and everybody saw what had operated his conversion.

It is half an hour, by rail, from Frankfort to Homburg, and the party could not be seated together. Vizard bestowed Zoe and Lord Uxmoor in one carriage, Fanny and Severne in another, and himself and a cigar in a third. Severne sat

gazing piteously on Fanny Dover, but never said a word. She eyed him satirically for a good while, and then she said, cheerfully, "Well, Mr Severne, how do you like the turn things are taking?"

"Miss Dover, I am very unhappy."

"Serves you right."

"Oh, pray don't say that. It is on you I depend."

"On me, sir! What have I to do with your flirtations?"

"No; but you are so clever, and so good. If, for once, you will take a poor fellow's part with Miss Vizard, behind my back; oh, please do—pray do," and, in the ardour of entreaty, he caught Fanny's white hand and kissed it with warm but respectful devotion. Indeed he held it, and kissed it again and again, till Fanny, though she minded it no more than marble, was going to ask him satirically whether he had not almost done with it, when at last he contrived to squeeze out one of his little hysterical tears, and drop it on her hand.

Now the girl was not butter, like some of her sex; far from it: but neither was she wood; indeed she was not old enough for that; so this crocodile tear won her for the time being. "There

—there," said she; "don't be a baby. I'll be on your side to-night: only, if you care for her, come and look after her yourself. Beautiful women with money won't stand neglect, Mr Severne; and why should they? They are not like poor me; they have got the game in their hands."

The train stopped. Vizard's party drove to the opera, and Severne ordered a cab "to the Golden Star," meaning to stop it and get out; but, looking at his watch, he found it wanted half-an-hour to gambling time, so he settled to have a cup of coffee first, and a cigar; with this view he let the man drive him to the "Golden Star."

CHAPTER III.

Ina Klosking worked night and day upon "Siebel" in Gounod's "Faust," and the songs that had been added to give weight to the part.

She came early to the theatre at night, and sat, half dressed, fatigued, and nervous, in her dressing-room.

Crash!—the first *coup d'archet* announced the overture, and roused her energy, as if Ithuriel's spear had pricked her. She came down dressed, to listen at one of the upper entrances, to fill herself with the musical theme, before taking her part in it, and also to gauge the audience, and the singers.

The man "Faust" was a German; but the musical part "Faust" seems better suited to an Italian or a Frenchman. Indeed some say that, as a rule, the German genius excels in creation, and the Italian in representation or

interpretation. For my part I am unable to judge nations in the lump, as some fine fellows do, because nations are composed of very different individuals, and I know only one to the million; but I do take on me to say that the individual Herr who executed Doctor Faustus at Homburg that night, had everything to learn, except what he had to unlearn. His person was obese; his delivery of the words was mouthing, chewing, and gurgling; and he uttered the notes in tune, but without point, pathos, or passion; a steady lay-clerk from York or Durham Cathedral would have done a little better, because he would have been no colder at heart, and more exact in time, and would have sung clean, whereas this gentleman set his windpipe trembling, all through the business, as if palsy was passion. By what system of leverage such a man came to be hoisted on to such a pinnacle of song as "Faust," puzzled our English friends in front as much as it did the Anglo-Danish artist at the wing; for English girls know what is what in Opera.

The "Marguerite" had a voice of sufficient compass, and rather sweet, though thin. The part demands a better *actress* than Patti, and

this Fraulein was not half as good : she put on the painful grin of a prize-fighter who has received a staggerer, and grinned all through the part, though there is little in it to grin at.

She also suffered by having to play to a "Faust" milked of his poetry, and self-smitten with a "tremolo," which, as I said before, is the voice of palsy, and is not, nor ever was, nor ever will be, the voice of passion. Bless your heart! passion is a manly thing, a womanly thing, a grand thing; not a feeble, quavering, palsied, anile, senile thing. Learn that, ye trembling, quavering idiots of song!

"They let me down," whispered Ina Klosking to her faithful Ashmead. "I feel all out of tune. I shall never be able. And the audience so cold. It will be like singing in a sepulchre."

"What would you think of them if they applauded?" said Ashmead.

"I should say they were good, charitable souls, and the very audience I shall want in five minutes."

"No, no," said Ashmead; "all you want is a discriminating audience; and this is one. Remember they have all seen Patti in 'Marguerite.' Is it likely they would applaud this tin stick?"

Ina turned the conversation with feminine quickness—"Mr Ashmead, have you kept your promise? my name is not in the programme?"

"It is not; and a great mistake, too."

"I have not been announced by name in any way?"

"No. But of course I have nursed you a bit."

"Nursed me? What is that? Oh, what have you been doing? No *charlatanerie*, I hope."

"Nothing of the kind," said Ashmead, stoutly; "only the regular business."

"And pray what is the regular business?" inquired Ina, distrustfully.

"Why, of course, I sent on the manager to say that Mademoiselle Schwaub was taken seriously ill; that we had been fearing we must break faith with the public, for the first time. But that a cantatrice, who had left the stage, appreciated our difficulty, and had, with rare kindness, come to our aid for this one night; we felt sure a Humbug audience—what am I saying?—a Homburg audience would appreciate this, and make due allowance for a performance undertaken in such a spirit, and with imperfect

rehearsals, &c.—in short, the usual patter; and the usual effect, great applause. Indeed the only applause that I have heard in this theatre to-night. Ashmead ahead of Gounod, so far."

Ina Klosking put both hands before her face, and gave a little moan. She had really a soul above these artifices. "So then," said she, "if they do receive me, it will be out of charity."

"No, no; but on your first night you must have two strings to your bow."

"But I have only one. These cajoling speeches are a waste of breath. A singer can sing, or she can *not* sing, and they find out which it is, as soon as she opens her mouth."

"Well, then, you open your mouth—that is just what half the singers can't do—and they will soon find out you can sing."

"I hope they may; I do not know. I am discouraged; I'm terrified; I think it is stage-fright," and she began to tremble visibly, for the time drew near.

Ashmead ran off, and brought her some brandy-and-water. She put up her hand against it with royal scorn. "No, sir!—if the theatre—and the lights—and the people—the mind of

Goethe—and the music of Gounod, can't excite me without *that*, put me at the counter of a *café*, for I have no business here."

The power, without violence, and the grandeur with which she said this, would have brought down the house had she spoken it in a play without a note of music; and Ashmead drew back respectfully, but chuckled internally at the idea of this Minerva giving change in a *café*.

And now her cue was coming. She ordered everybody out of the entrance not very ceremoniously, and drew well back. Then, at her cue, she made a stately rush, and so, being in full swing before she cleared the wing, she swept into the centre of the stage with great rapidity and resolution; no trace either of her sorrowful heart or her quaking limbs was visible from the front.

There was a little applause, all due to Ashmead's preliminary apology, but there was no real reception; for Germany is large and musical, and she was not immediately recognised at Homburg. But there was that indescribable flutter which marks a good impression and keen expectation suddenly aroused. She was beautiful on the stage, for one thing; her figure rather

tall and stately, and her face full of power : and then the very way she came on showed the step and carriage of an artist at home upon the boards.

She cast a rapid glance round the house, observed its size, and felt her way. She sang her first song evenly, but not tamely, yet with restrained power; but the tones were so full and flexible, the expression so easy yet exact, that the judges saw there was no effort, and suspected something big might be yet in store tonight. At the end of her song she did let out for a moment, and, at this well-timed foretaste of her power, there was applause, but nothing wonderful.

She was quite content, however. She met Ashmead, as she came off, and said, "All is well, my friend, so far. They are sitting in judgment on me, like sensible people, and not in a hurry. I rather like that."

"Your own fault," said Joseph. "You should have been announced. Prejudice is a surer card than judgment. The public is an ass."

"It must come to the same thing in the end," said the Klosking, firmly. "One can sing, or one cannot."

Her next song was encored, and she came off flushed with art and gratified pride. "I have no fears now," said she, to her Achates, firmly. "I have my barometer; a young lady in the stalls. Oh, such a beautiful creature, with black hair and eyes! She applauds me fearlessly. Her glorious eyes speak to mine, and inspire me. She is *happy*, she is. I drink sunbeams at her. I shall act and sing 'Le Parlate d'Amor' for *her* —and you will see."

Between the acts, who should come in but Ned Severne, and glided into the vacant stall by Zoe's side.

She quivered at his coming near her; he saw it, and felt a thrill of pleasure himself.

"How is 'S.T.'?" said she, kindly.

"'S.T.?'" said he, forgetting.

"Why, your sick friend, to be sure."

"Oh, not half so bad as he thought. I was a fool to lose an hour of you for *him*. He was hipped; had lost all his money at *rouge et noir*. So I lent him fifty pounds, and that did him more good than the doctor. You forgive me?"

"Forgive you? I approve. Are you going back to him?" said she, demurely.

"No, thank you, I have made sacrifices enough."

And so indeed he had, having got cleaned out of £300, through preferring gambling to beauty.

"Singers good?" he inquired.

"Wretched; all but one—and she is divine."

"Indeed! Who is she?"

"I don't know. A gentleman in black came out——"

"Mephistopheles?"

"No;—how dare you?—and said a singer that had retired would perform the part of 'Siebel,' to oblige; and she has obliged me for one. She is, oh, so superior to the others! Such a heavenly contralto; and her upper notes honey dropping from the comb. And then she is so modest, so dignified, *and* so beautiful. She is fair as a lily; and such a queen-like brow, and deep, deep, grey eyes, full of sadness and soul. I'm afraid she is not happy. Once or twice she fixed them on me, and they magnetised me, and drew me to her. So I magnetised her in return. I should know her anywhere fifty years hence. Now, if I was a man, I should love that woman, and make her love me."

"Then I am very glad you are not a man," said Severne, tenderly.

"So am I," whispered Zoe, and blushed.

The curtain rose.

"Listen now, Mr Chatterbox," said Zoe.

Ned Severne composed himself to listen; but Fraulein Graas had not sung many bars before he revolted. "Listen to what?" said he, "and look at what? The only 'Marguerite' in the place is by my side."

Zoe coloured with pleasure; but her good sense was not to be blinded. "The only good black Mephistophe-*less* you mean," said she. "To be 'Marguerite,' one must be great, and sweet, and tender; yes, and far more lovely than ever woman was. That lady is a better colour for the part than I am; but neither she nor I shall ever be 'Marguerite.'"

He murmured in her ear, "You are 'Marguerite,' for you could fire a man's heart so that he would sell his soul to gain you."

It was the accent of passion, and the sensitive girl quivered. Yet she defended herself — in words: "Hush!" said she; "that is wicked — out of an opera. Fanny would laugh at you, if she heard."

Here were two reasons for not making such hot love in the stalls of an opera. Which of the two weighed most with the fair reasoner shall be left to her own sex.

The brief scene ended with the declaration of the evil spirit that 'Marguerite' is lost.

"There," said Zoe, naïvely, "that is over, thank goodness: now you will hear *my* singer."

"Siebel" and "Marta" came on from opposite sides of the stage. "See!" said Zoe, "isn't she lovely?" and she turned her beaming face full on Severne, to share her pleasure with him. To her amazement the man seemed transformed; a dark cloud had come over his sunny countenance. He sat, pale, and seemed to stare at the tall, majestic, dreamy singer, who stood immovable, dressed like a velvet youth, yet looking like no earthly boy, but a draped statue of Mercury,

"New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill."

The blood left his lips, and Zoe thought he was faint; but the next moment he put his handkerchief hastily to his nose, and wriggled his way out, with a rush and a crawl, strangely combined, at the very moment when the singer

delivered her first commanding note of recitative.

Everybody about looked surprised and disgusted at so ill-timed an exit; but Zoe, who had seen his white face, was seriously alarmed, and made a movement to rise too, and watch, or even follow him: but, when he got to the side, he looked back to her, and made her a signal that his nose was bleeding, but it was of no great consequence. He even pointed with his finger out and then back again, indicating he should not be long gone.

This reassured her greatly; for she had always been told a little bleeding of that sort was good for hot-headed young people.

Then the singer took complete hold of her. The composer, to balance the delightful part of "Marguerite," has given "Siebel" a melody, with which wonders can be done; and the Klosking had made a considerable reserve of her powers for this crowning effort. After a recitative that rivalled the silver trumpet, she flung herself with immediate and electrifying ardour into the melody; the orchestra, taken by surprise, fought feebly for the old ripple, but the Klosking, resolute by nature, was now mighty

as Neptune, and would have her big waves. The momentary struggle, in which she was loyally seconded by the conductor, evoked her grand powers. Catgut had to yield to brains, and the whole orchestra, composed, after all, of good musicians, soon caught the divine afflatus, and the little theatre seemed on fire with music: the air, sung with a large rhythm, swelled and rose, and thrilled every breast with amazement and delight; the house hung breathless; by-and-by there were pale cheeks, panting bosoms, and wet eyes, the true, rare triumphs of the sovereigns of song; and, when the last note had pealed and ceased to vibrate, the pent-up feelings broke forth in a roar of applause, which shook the dome, followed by a clapping of hands like a salvo, that never stopped till Ina Klosking, who had retired, came forward again.

She curtsied with admirable dignity, modesty, and respectful gravity, and the applause thundered, and people rose at her in clusters about the house, and waved their hats and handkerchiefs at her, and a little Italian recognised her, and cried out as loud as he could, "Vivat la Klosking, vivat!" and she heard that, and it gave her a thrill; and Zoe Vizard, being out of

England, and therefore brave as a lioness, stood boldly up at her full height, and taking her bouquet in the right hand, carried it swiftly to her left ear, and so flung it, with a free back-handed sweep more oriental than English, into the air, and it lighted by the singer; and she saw the noble motion, and the bouquet fly, and, when she made her last curtsy at the wing, she fixed her eyes on Zoe, and then put her hand to her heart with a most touching gesture, that said, "Most of all I value your bouquet and your praise."

Then the house buzzed, and ranks were levelled; little people spoke to big people, and big to little, in mutual congratulation; for at such rare moments (except in Anglo-Saxony) instinct seems to tell men that true art is a sunshine of the soul, and blesses the rich and the poor alike.

One person was affected in another way. Harrington Vizard sat rapt in attention, and never took his eyes off her, yet said not a word.

Several Russian and Prussian grandees sought an introduction to the new singer; but she pleaded fatigue. The manager entreated her to

sup with him, and meet the Grand Duke of Hesse. She said she had a prior engagement.

She went quietly home, and supped with her faithful Ashmead, and very heartily too; for nature was exhausted, and agitation had quite spoiled her dinner.

Joseph Ashmead, in the pride of his heart, proposed a bottle of champagne. The Queen of Song, with triumph flushed, looked rather blue at that. "My friend," said she, in a meek deprecating way, "we are working people: is not bordeaux good enough for *us?*"

"Yes; but it is not good enough for the occasion," said Joseph, a little testily. "Well, never mind;" and he muttered to himself, "that is the worst of good women; they are so terribly stingy."

The Queen of Song, with triumph flushed, did not catch these words, but only a little growling. However, as supper proceeded, she became uneasy. So she rang the bell and ordered *a pint:* of this she drank one spoonful. The remainder, co-operating with triumph and claret, kept Ashmead in a great flow of spirits. He traced her a brilliant career. To be photographed to-morrow morning as "Siebel," and in

plain dress. Paragraphs in *Era*, *Figaro*, *Galignani*, *Independance Belge*, and the leading dailies. Large woodcuts before leaving Homburg for Paris, London, Vienna, Petersburg, and New York.

"I'm in your hands," said she, and smiled languidly, to please him.

But by-and-by he looked at her, and found she was taking a little cry all to herself.

"Dear me!" said he; "what is the matter?"

"My friend, forgive me. *He* was not there to share my triumph."

CHAPTER IV.

As the opera drew to an end, Zoe began to look round more and more for Severne; but he did not come, and Lord Uxmoor offered his arm earnestly. She took it; but hung back a moment on his very arm, to tell Harrington Mr Severne had been taken ill.

At the railway station the truant emerged suddenly, just as the train was leaving; but Lord Uxmoor had secured three seats, and the defaulter had to go with Harrington. On reaching the hotel, the ladies took their bed-candles; but Uxmoor found time to propose an excursion next day, Sunday, to a lovely little lake—open carriage, four horses. The young ladies accepted, but Mr Severne declined; he thanked Lord Uxmoor politely, but he had arrears of correspondence.

Zoe cast a mortified, and rather a haughty

glance on him; and Fanny shrugged her shoulders incredulously.

These two ladies brushed hair together in Zoe's room. That is a soothing operation, my masters, and famous for stimulating females to friendly gossip; but this time there was, for once, a guarded reserve. Zoe was irritated, puzzled, mortified, and even grieved, by Severne's conduct. Fanny was gnawed by jealousy, and out of temper. She had forgiven Zoe Ned Severne. But that young lady was insatiable; Lord Uxmoor, too, had fallen openly in love with her; openly to a female eye: so then a blonde had no chance, with a dark girl by: thus reasoned she, and it was intolerable.

It was some time before either spoke an atom of what was uppermost in her mind. They each doled out a hundred sentences that missed the mind and mingled readily with the atmosphere, being in fact mere preliminary and idle air: so two deer, in duel, go about and about, and even affect to look another way, till they are ripe for collision. There be writers would give the reader all the preliminary puffs of articulated wind, and everybody would say, "How clever! That is just the way girls really

talk." But I leave the glory of photographing nullities to the geniuses of the age, and run to the first words which could, without impiety, be called dialogue.

"Don't you think his conduct a little mysterious?" said Zoe, *mal àpropos* of anything that had been said hitherto.

"Well, yes; rather," said Fanny, with marked carelessness.

"First, a sick friend; then a bleeding at the nose; and now he won't drive to the lake with us: arrears of correspondence? Pooh!"

Now Fanny's suspicions were deeper than Zoe's; she had observed Severne keenly: but it was not her cue to speak; she yawned, and said, "What *does* it matter?"

"Don't be unkind. It matters to *me*."

"Not it. You have another ready."

"What other? There is no one that I—— Fanny."

"Oh, nonsense! The man is evidently smitten, and you keep encouraging him."

"No, I don't; I am barely civil. And don't be ill-natured. What *can* I do?"

"Why, be content with one at a time."

"It is very rude to talk so. Besides, I haven't

got one, much less two. I begin to doubt *him;* and, Lord Uxmoor! you know I cannot possibly care for him—an acquaintance of yesterday."

"But you know all about him; that he is an excellent *parti*," said Fanny, with a provoking sneer.

This was not to be borne.

"Oh," said Zoe, "I see! you want him for yourself. It is *you* that are not content with one. You forget how poor Harrington would miss your attentions. He would *begin* to appreciate them—when he had lost them."

This stung, and Fanny turned white and red by turns. "I deserve this," said she, "for wasting advice on a coquet."

"That is not true; I'm no coquet: and here I am, asking your advice, and you only snub me. You are a jealous, cross, unreasonable thing."

"Well, I'm not a hypocrite."

"I never was called so before," said Zoe, nobly and gently.

"Then you were not found out, that is all. You look so simple and ingenuous, and blush if a man says half a word to you; and all the time you are a greater flirt than I am."

"Oh, Fanny!" screamed Zoe, with horror.

It seems a repartee may be conveyed in a scream; for Fanny now lost her temper altogether. "Your conduct with those two men is abominable," said she. "I won't speak to you more."

"I beg you will *not*, in your present temper," said Zoe, with unaffected dignity, and rising like a Greek column.

Fanny flounced out of the room.

Zoe sat down and sighed, and her glorious eyes were dimmed. Mystery—doubt—and now a quarrel. What a day! At her age, a little cloud seems to darken the whole sky.

Next morning the little party met at breakfast. Lord Uxmoor, anticipating a delightful day, was in high spirits, and he and Fanny kept up the ball. She had resolved, in the silent watches of the night, to contest him with Zoe, and make every possible use of Severne, in the conflict.

Zoe was silent and *distraite*, and did not even try to compete with her sparkling rival. But Lord Uxmoor's eyes often wandered from his sprightly companion to Zoe, and it was plain he longed for a word from her mouth.

Fanny observed, bit her lip, and tacked inter-

nally, "'bout ship," as the sailors say. Her game now, conceived in a moment, and at once put in execution, was to encourage Uxmoor's attentions to Zoe. She began by openly courting Mr Severne, to make Zoe talk to Uxmoor, and also make him think that Severne and she were the lovers.

Her intentions were to utilise the coming excursion; she would attach herself to Harrington, and so drive Zoe and Uxmoor together; and then Lord Uxmoor, at his present rate of amorous advance, would probably lead Zoe to a detached rock, and make her a serious declaration. This good, artful girl, felt sure such a declaration, made a few months hence in Barfordshire, would be accepted, and herself left in the cold. Therefore she resolved it should be made prematurely, and in Prussia, with Severne at hand, and so in all probability come to nothing. She even glimpsed a vista of consequences, and in that little avenue discerned the figure of Fanny Dover playing the part of consoler, friend, and ultimately spouse, to a wealthy noble.

CHAPTER V.

THE letters were brought in: one was to Vizard, from Herries, announcing a remittance; one to Lord Uxmoor. On reading it, he was surprised into an exclamation, and his face expressed great concern.

"Oh!" said Zoe—"Harrington!"

Harrington's attention being thus drawn, he said, "No bad news, I hope?"

"Yes," said Uxmoor, in a low voice, "very bad. My oldest, truest, dearest friend has been seized with small-pox, and his life is in danger. He has asked for me, poor fellow. This is from his sister. I must start by the twelve o'clock train."

"Small-pox! why, it is contagious!" cried Fanny; "and so disfiguring!"

"I can't help that," said the honest fellow; and instantly rang the bell for his servant, and gave the requisite orders.

Zoe, whose eye had never left him all the time, said, softly, "It is brave and good of you. We poor, emotional, cowardly girls should sit down and cry."

"*You* would not, Miss Vizard," said he, firmly, looking full at her. "If you think you would, you don't know yourself."

Zoe coloured high, and was silent.

Then Lord Uxmoor showed the true English gentleman. "I do hope," said he, earnestly, though in a somewhat broken voice, "that you will not let this spoil the pleasure we had planned together. Harrington will be my deputy."

"Well, I don't know," said Harrington, sympathisingly. Mr Severne remarked, "Such an occurrence puts pleasure out of one's head." This he said, with his eyes on his plate, like one repeating a lesson. "Vizard, I entreat you," said Uxmoor, almost vexed. "It will only make me more unhappy if you don't."

"We will go," cried Zoe, earnestly; "we promise to go. What does it matter? We shall think of you and your poor friend wherever we are. And I shall pray for him. But, ah! I know how little prayers avail to avert these cruel bereavements." She was young, but old

enough to have prayed hard for her sick mother's life, and, like the rest of us, prayed in vain. At this remembrance the tears ran undisguised down her cheeks.

The open sympathy of one so young and beautiful, and withal rather reserved, made Lord Uxmoor gulp; and, not to break down before them all, he blurted out that he must go and pack: with this he hurried away.

He was unhappy. Besides the calamity he dreaded, it was grievous to be torn away from a woman he loved at first sight, and just when she had come out so worthy of his love: she was a high-minded creature; she had been silent and reserved so long as the conversation was trivial; but, when trouble came, she was the one to speak to him bravely and kindly. Well, what must be, must. All this ran through his mind, and made him sigh; but it never occurred to him to shirk —to telegraph instead of going—nor yet to value himself on his self-denial.

They did not see him again till he was on the point of going, and then he took leave of them all, Zoe last. When he came to her, he ignored the others, except that he lowered his voice in speaking to her. "God bless you for your kind-

ness, Miss Vizard. It is a little hard upon a fellow to have to run away from such an acquaintance, just when I have been so fortunate as to make it."

"Oh, Lord Uxmoor," said Zoe, innocently, "never mind that. Why, we live in the same county, and we are on the way home. All I think of is your poor friend; and do please telegraph—to Harrington."

He promised he would, and went away disappointed somehow at her last words.

When he was gone Severne went out on the balcony to smoke, and Harrington held a council with the young ladies. "Well now," said he, "about this trip to the lake."

"I shall not go, for one," said Zoe, resolutely.

"La!" said Fanny, looking carefully away from her to Harrington; "and *she* was the one that insisted."

Zoe ignored the speaker, and set her face stiffly towards Harrington. "She only *said* that to *him*."

Fanny.—"But unfortunately ears are not confined to the noble."

Zoe.—"Nor tongues to the discreet."

Both these remarks were addressed pointedly to Harrington.

"Hullo!" said he, looking from one flaming girl to the other; "am I to be a shuttlecock? and your discreet tongues the battledores? What is up?"

"We don't speak," said the frank Zoe; "that is up."

"Why, what is the row?"

"No matter" (stiffly).

"No great matter, I'll be bound. 'Toll, toll the bell.' Here goes one more immortal friendship—quenched in eternal silence."

Both ladies bridled. Neither spoke.

"And dead silence, as ladies understand it, consists in speaking *at* one another instead of *to*."

No reply.

"That is well-bred taciturnity."

No answer.

"The dignified reserve that distinguishes an estrangement from a squabble."

No reply.

"Well, I admire permanent sentiments, good or bad; constant resolves, &c. Your friendship has not proved immortal; so now let us see how long you can hold spite—SIEVES!" Then he affected to start. "What is this? I spy a

rational creature out on yonder balcony. I hasten to join him. 'Birds of a feather,' you know;" and with that he went out to his favourite, and never looked behind him.

The young ladies, indignant at the contempt the big man had presumed to cast upon the constant soul of woman, turned two red faces and four sparkling eyes to each other, with the instinctive sympathy of the jointly injured; but, remembering in time, turned sharply round again, and presented napes, and so sat sullen.

By-and-by a chilling thought fell upon them both at the same moment of time. The men were good friends as usual, safe, by sex, from tiffs, and could do without them; and a dull day impended over the hostile fair.

Thereupon the ingenious Fanny resolved to make a splash of some sort, and disturb stagnation. She suddenly cried out, "La! and the man is gone away: so what is the use?" This remark she was careful to level at bare space.

Zoe, addressing the same person—space, to wit—inquired of him if anybody in his parts knew to whom this young lady was addressing herself.

"To a girl that is too sensible not to see the folly of quarrelling about a man—*when he is gone*," said Fanny.

"If it is me you mean," said Zoe, stiffly; "*really* I am *surprised*. You forget we are at daggers drawn."

"No, I don't, dear; and parted for ever."

Zoe smiled at that against her will.

"Zoe!" (penitentially.)

"Frances!" (archly.)

"Come, cuddle me quick!"

Zoe was all round her neck in a moment, like a lace scarf, and there was violent kissing, with a tear or two.

Then they put an arm round each other's waists, and went all about the premises intertwined like snakes; and Zoe gave Fanny her cameo brooch, the one with the pearls round it.

The person to whom Vizard fled from the tongue of beauty was a delightful talker: he read two or three newspapers every day, and recollected the best things. Now it is not everybody can remember a thousand disconnected facts and recall them *apropos*. He was various, fluent, and above all superficial; and such are

your best conversers; they have something good and strictly ephemeral to say on everything, and don't know enough of anything to impale their hearers. In my youth there talked in Pall Mall a gentleman known as "Conversation Sharp." He eclipsed everybody. Even Macaulay paled. Sharp talked all the blessed afternoon, and grave men listened enchanted; and of all he said, nothing stuck. Where be now your Sharpiana? The learned may be compared to mines; these desultory charmers are more like the ornamental cottage near Staines, forty or fifty rooms, and the whole structure one storey high. The mine teems with solid wealth; but you must grope and trouble to come at it: it is easier and pleasanter to run about the cottage with a lot of rooms all on the ground-floor.

The mind and body both get into habits—sometimes apart, sometimes in conjunction. Nowadays we seat the body to work the intellect, even in its lower form of mechanical labour: it is your clod that toddles about labouring. The Peripatetics did not endure: their method was not suited to man's microcosm. Bodily movements fritter mental attention. We *sit* at the feet of Gamaliel, or, as some call him, Tyndall;

and we sit to Bacon and Adam Smith. But, when we are standing or walking, we love to take brains easy. If this delightful chatterbox had been taken down shorthand and printed, and Vizard had been set down to Severni opuscula, 10 vols. — and, mind you, Severne had talked all ten by this time—the Barfordshire squire and old Oxonian would have cried out for "more matter with less words," and perhaps have even fled for relief to some shorter treatise, Bacon's 'Essays,' Browne's 'Religio Medici,' or Buckle's 'Civilisation.' But lounging in a balcony, and lazily breathing a cloud, he could have listened all day to his desultory, delightful friend, overflowing with little questions, little answers, little queries, little epigrams, little maxims *à la Rochefoucauld*, little histories, little anecdotes, little gossip, and little snap shots at every feather flying.

> "Quicquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas
> Gaudia, discursus, nostri farrago Severni."

But, alas! after an hour of touch-and-go, of superficiality and soft delight, the desultory charmer fell on a subject he had studied. So then he bored his companion for the first time in all the tour.

But, to tell the honest truth, Mr Severne had hitherto been pleasing his friend with a cold-blooded purpose. His preliminary gossip, that made the time fly so agreeably, was intended to oil the way; to lubricate the passage of a premeditated pill. As soon as he had got Vizard into perfect good-humour, he said, *apropos* of nothing that had passed, "By the by, old fellow, that five hundred pounds you promised to lend me!"

Vizard was startled by this sudden turn of a conversation hitherto agreeable.

"Why, you have had three hundred and lost it," said he. "Now take my advice, and don't lose any more."

"I don't mean to. But I am determined to win back the three hundred, and a great deal more, before I leave this. I have discovered a system, an infallible one."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Harrington, gravely. "That is the second step on the road to ruin; the gambler with a system is the confirmed maniac."

"What! because *other* systems have been tried, and proved to be false? Mine is untried, and it is mere prejudice to condemn it unheard."

"Propound it then," said Vizard. "Only please observe the bank has got its system—you forget that; and the bank's system is to take a positive advantage, which must win in the long-run; therefore all counter-systems must lose in the long-run."

"But the bank is tied to a long-run, the individual player is not."

This reply checked Vizard for a moment, and the other followed up his advantage. "Now, Vizard, be reasonable. What would the trifling advantage the bank derives from an incident, which occurs only once in twenty-eight deals, avail against a player who could foresee at any given deal whether the card that was going to come up the nearest thirty, would be on the red or black?"

"No avail at all. God Almighty could break the bank every afternoon. *Après?* as we say in France. Do you pretend to omniscience?"

"Not exactly."

"Well, but prescience of isolated events, preceded by no *indicia,* belongs only to omniscience. Did they not teach you that much at Oxford?"

"They taught me very little at Oxford."

"Fault of the place, eh? You taught *them* something, though; and the present conversation reminds me of it. In your second term, when every other man is still quizzed and kept down as a freshman, you were already a leader —a chief of misrule; you founded a whist-club in Trinity, the primmest college of all. The Dons rooted you out in college; but you did not succumb; you fulfilled the saying of Sydney Smith, that 'Cribbage should be played in caverns, and sixpenny whist in the howling wilderness.' Ha! ha! how well I remember riding across Bullington Green one fine afternoon, and finding four Oxford hacks haltered in a row, and the four undergraduates who had hired them on long tick sitting cross-legged under the hedge, like Turks or tailors, round a rude table with the legs sawed down to stumps! You had two packs, and a portable inkstand, and were so hard at it that I put my mare's nose right over the quartette before you saw either her or me. That hedge was like a drift of odoriferous snow with the hawthorn-bloom, and primroses sparkled on its bank like topazes. The birds chirruped, the sky smiled, the sun

burnt perfumes; and there sat my lord and his fellow-maniacs, snick-snack—pit-pat—cutting, dealing, playing, revoking, scoring, and exchanging I.O.U.'s not worth the paper."

"All true, but the revoking," said Severne, merrily. "Monster! by the memory of those youthful days, I demand a fair hearing." Then, gravely, "Hang it all, Vizard! I am not a fellow that is always intruding his affairs and his theories upon other men."

"No, no, no," said Vizard, hastily, and half apologetically; "go on."

"Well, then, of course I don't pretend to foreknowledge—but I do to experience; and you know experience teaches the wise."

"Not to fling five hundred after three. There—I beg pardon. Proceed, instructor of youth."

"Do listen, then; experience teaches us that luck has its laws; and I build my system on one of them. If two opposite accidents are sure to happen equally often in a total of fifty times, people, who have not observed, expect them to happen turn about, and bet accordingly. But they don't happen turn about; they make short runs, and sometimes long ones. They positively

avoid alternation. Have you not observed this at *trente et quarante?*"

"No."

"Then you have not watched the cards."

"Not much. The faces of the gamblers were always my study. *They* are instructive."

"Well, then, I'll give you an example outside,—for the principle runs through all equal chances;—take the University boat-race; you have kept your eye on that?"

"Rather. Never missed one yet. Come all the way from Barfordshire to see it."

"Well, there's an example."

"Of chance? No, thank you. That goes by strength, skill, wind, endurance, chaste living, self-denial, and judicious training. Every winning boat is manned by virtues." His eye flashed, and he was as earnest all in a moment as he had been listless. A Continental cynic had dubbed this insular cynic mad.

The professor of chances smiled superior. "Those things decide each individual race, and the best men win, because it happens to be the only race that is never sold. But go farther back, and you find it is chance. It is pure chance that sends the best men up to Cam-

bridge two or three years running, and then to Oxford. With this key, take the facts my system rests on. There are two. The first is, that in thirty and odd races and matches, the University luck has come out equal on the river and at Lord's: the second is, the luck has seldom alternated. I don't say never. But look at the list of events; it is published every March. You may see there the great truth that even chances shun direct alternation. In this, properly worked, lies a fortune at Homburg, where the play is square. Red gains once; you back red next time, and stop. You are on black, and win; you double. This is the game if you have only a few pounds. But with five hundred pounds you can double more courageously, and work the short run hard; and that is how losses are averted, and gains secured. Once at Wiesbaden I caught a *croupier* out on a holiday. It was Good Friday, you know. I gave him a stunning dinner. He was close as wax, at first,—that might be the salt fish; but after the *rognons à la brochette*, and a bottle of champagne, he let out. I remember one thing he said. 'Monsieur; ce que fait la fortune de la banque ce n'est pas le petit avantage qu'elle

tire du refait—quoique cela y est pour quelque-chose,—c'est la témérité de ceux qui perdent, et la timidité de ceux qui gagnent.'"

"And," says Vizard, "there is a French proverb founded on *experience*—

'C'est encore rouge qui perd,
Et encore noir,
Mais toujours blanc qui gagne.'"

Severne, for the first time, looked angry and mortified; he turned his back, and was silent. Vizard looked at him uneasily, hesitated a moment, then flung the remainder of his cigar away, and seemed to rouse himself body and soul. He squared his shoulders, as if he was going to box the Demon of play for his friend, and he let out good sense right and left, and, indeed, was almost betrayed into eloquence. "What!" he cried,—"you, who are so bright, and keen, and knowing in everything else, are you really so blinded by egotism and credulity as to believe that you can invent any method of betting at *rouge et noir* that has not been tried before you were born? Do you remember the first word in La Bruyère's famous work?"

"No," said Ned, sulkily. "Read nothing but newspapers."

"Good lad. Saves a deal of trouble. Well, he begins 'Tout est dit;' 'Everything has been said:' and I say that, in your business, 'Tout est fait;' 'Everything has been done.' Every move has been tried before you existed, and the result of all is, that to bet against the bank, wildly or systematically, is to gamble against a rock. *Si monumenta quæris, circumspice.* Use your eyes, man. Look at the Kursaal, its luxuries, its gardens, its gilding, its attractions, all of them cheap, except the one that pays for all: all these delights, and the rents, and the *croupiers*, and the servants, and the income and liveries of an unprincipled prince, who would otherwise be a poor but honest gentleman with one *bonne* instead of thirty blazing lackeys, all come from the gains of the bank, which are the losses of the players, especially of those that have got a system."

Severne shot in, "A bank was broken last week."

"Was it? Then all it lost has returned to it, or will return to it to-night; for gamblers know no day of rest."

"Oh yes, they do. It is shut on Good Friday."

"You surprise me. Only three hundred and sixty-four days in the year! Brainless avarice is more reasonable than I thought. Severne, yours is a very serious case. You have reduced your income, that is clear; for an English gentleman does not stay years and years abroad, unless he has outrun the constable; and I feel sure gambling has done it. You had the fever from a boy. Bullington Green! 'As the twig's bent the tree's inclined.' Come, come — make a stand. We are friends. Let us help one another against our besetting foibles. Let us practise antique wisdom; let us 'know ourselves,' and leave Homburg to-morrow, instead of Tuesday."

Severne looked sullen, but said nothing; then Vizard gave him too hastily credit for some of that sterling friendship, bordering on love, which warmed his own faithful breast. Under this delusion he made an extraordinary effort; he used an argument which, with himself, would have been irresistible. "Look here," said he, "I'll—won't you have a cigar?—there; now I'll tell you something—I have a mania as bad as yours; only mine is intermittent, thank heaven. I'm told a million women are as good

as a million men, perhaps better. It may be so. But when I, an individual, stake my heart on lovely woman, she always turns out unworthy. With me, the sex *avoids alternation.* Therefore I rail on them wholesale. It is not philosophical; but I don't do it to instruct mankind—it is to soothe my spleen. Well, would you believe it, once in every three years, in spite of my experience, I am always bitten again. After my lucid interval has expired, I fall in with some woman who seems not like the rest, but an angel. Then I, though I'm averse to the sex, fall an easy, an immediate, victim, to the individual."

"Love at first sight."

"Not a bit of it. If she is as beautiful as an angel, with the voice of a peacock or a guinea-hen—and, luckily for me, that is a frequent arrangement—she is no more to me than the fire-shovel. If she has a sweet voice, and pale eyes, I'm safe. Indeed I am safe against Juno, Venus, and Minerva, for two years and several months, after the last; but when two events coincide—when my time is up, and the lovely, melodious female comes—then I am lost. Before I have seen her and heard her five minutes,

I know my fate, and I never resist it. I never can; that is a curious part of the mania. Then commences a little drama, all the acts of which are stale copies; yet each time they take me by surprise, as if they were new. In spite of past experience, I begin all confidence and trust: by-and-by come the subtle but well-known signs of deceit; so doubt is forced on me; and then I am all suspicion, and so darkly vigilant, that soon all is certainty; for *les fourberies des femmes* are diabolically subtle, but monotonous. They seem to vary only on the surface. One looks too gentle and sweet to give any creature pain; I cherish her like a tender plant: she deceives me for the coarsest fellow she can find. Another comes the frank and candid dodge; she is very off-handed, she shows me it is not worth her while to betray: she deceives me, like the other, and with as little discrimination. The next has a face of beaming innocence, and a limpid eye that looks like transparent candour. She gazes long and calmly in my face, as if her eye loved to dwell on me—gazes with the eye of a gazelle or a young hare—and the baby lips below outlie the hoariest male fox in the Old Jewry. But, to complete the delusion, all my

sweethearts and wives are romantic and poetical skin-deep, or they would not attract me; and all turn out vulgar to the core. By their lovers alone can you ever know them. By the men they can't love, and the men they do love, you find these creatures, that imitate sentiment so divinely, are hard, prosaic, vulgar, little things, thinly gilt and double varnished."

"They are much better than we are; but you don't know how to take them," said Severne, with the calm superiority of success.

"No," replied Vizard, drily; "curse me if I do. Well, I did hope I had out-grown my mania, as I have done the toothache; for this time I had passed the fatal period, the three years. It is nearly four years now since I went through the established process,—as fixed beforehand as the dyer's or the cotton-weaver's,—adored her, trusted her blindly, suspected her, watched her, detected her, left her. By the by, she was my wife, the last: but that made no difference; she was neither better nor worse than the rest, and her methods and idiotic motives of deceit identical. Well, Ned, I was mistaken. Yesterday night I met my Fate once more."

"Where? in Frankfort?"

"No: at Homburg; at the opera. You must give me your word not to tell a soul."

"I pledge you my word of honour."

"Well; the lady who sang the part of 'Siebel.'"

"Siebel?" muttered Severne.

"Yes," said Vizard, dejectedly.

Severne fixed his eyes on his friend with a strange expression of confusion and curiosity, as if he could not take it all in. But he said nothing, only looked very hard all the time.

Vizard burst out: "'O miseras hominum menteis, o pectora cæca!' There I sat, in the stalls, a happy man comparatively, because my heart, though full of scars, was at peace, and my reason, after periodical abdications, had resumed its throne for good; so I, weak mortal, fancied. 'Siebel' appeared; tall, easy, dignified, and walking like a wave; modest, fair, noble, great, dreamy, and, above all, divinely sad. The soul of womanhood and music poured from her honey lips; she conquered all my senses: I felt something like a bolt of ice run down my back. I ought to have jumped up, and fled the theatre. I wish I had. But I never do. I am incurable. The charm deepened; and when she had sung 'Le

Parlate d'Amor' as no mortal ever sang and looked it, she left the stage; and carried my heart and soul away with her. What chance had I? Here shone all the beauties that adorn the body, all the virtues and graces that embellish the soul; they were wedded to poetry and ravishing music, and gave and took enchantment. I saw my paragon glide away, like a goddess, past the scenery, and I did not see her meet her lover at the next step,—a fellow with a wash-leather face, greasy locks in a sausage roll, and his hair shaved off his forehead,—and snatch a pot of porter from his hands, and drain it to the dregs, and say, 'It is all right, Harry; *that* fetched 'em.' But I know, by experience, she did: so *sauve qui peut;* dear friend and fellow-lunatic, for my sake and yours, leave Frankfort with me to-morrow."

Severne hung his head, and thought hard. Here was a new and wonderful turn. He felt all manner of strange things; a pang of jealousy for one. He felt that, on every account, it would be wise to go; and, indeed, dangerous to stay. But a mania is a mania, and so he could not. "Look here, old fellow," he said; "if the opera was on to-morrow, I would leave my three hun-

dred behind me, and sacrifice myself to you, sooner than expose you to the fascinations of so captivating a woman as Ina Klosking."

"Ina Klosking? Is that her name? How do *you* know?"

"I—I—fancy I heard so."

"Why, she was not announced. Ina Klosking! it is a sweet name," and he sighed.

"But you are quite safe from *her* for one day," continued Severne, "so you *must* be reasonable. I will go with you, Tuesday, as early as you like; but do be a good fellow, and let me have the five hundred, to try my system with to-morrow."

Vizard looked sad, and made no reply.

Severne got impatient. "Why, what is it to a rich fellow like you? If I had twelve thousand acres in a ring fence, no friend would ask me twice for such a trifling sum."

Vizard, for the first time, wore a supercilious smile, at being so misunderstood, and did not deign a reply.

Severne went on mistaking his man: "I can give you bills for the money, and for the three hundred you did lend me."

Vizard did not receive this as expected.

"Bills?" said he, gravely. "What, do you do that sort of thing as well?"

"Why not, pray? So long as I'm the holder, not the drawer nor the acceptor. Besides, they are not accommodation bills, but good commercial paper."

"You are a merchant, then; are you?"

"Yes; in a small way. If you will allow me, I will explain."

He did so; and to save comments, yet enable the reader to appreciate his explanation, the true part of it is printed in italics; the mendacious portion in ordinary type.

"*My estate in Huntingdonshire is not very large; and there are mortgages on it,* for the benefit of other members of my family. I was always desirous to pay off these mortgages; and took the best advice I could. *I have got an uncle:* he lives in the city. He put me on to a good thing. I bought a share in a trading vessel; she makes short trips, and turns her cargo often. She will take out paper to America, and bring back raw cotton: she will land that at Liverpool, and ship English hardware and cotton fabrics for the Mediterranean and Greece, and bring back currants from Xante, and lemons

from Portugal. She goes for the nimble shilling. Well, you know ships wear out: *and if you varnish them rotten, and insure them high, and they go to glory, Mr Plimsoll is down on you like a hammer.* So, when she had paid my purchase-money three times over, some fellows in the city made an offer for 'The Rover:' that was her name. My share came to twelve hundred, and my uncle said I was to take it. *Now I always feel bound by what he decides.* They gave me four bills, for four hundred, three hundred, three hundred, and two hundred. The four hundred was paid at maturity. *The others are not due yet.* I have only to send them to London, and I can get the money back by Thursday: but you want me to start on Tuesday."

"That is enough," said Vizard, wearily; "I will be your banker, and——"

"You are a good fellow," said Severne, warmly.

"No, no; I am a weak fellow, and an injudicious one. But it is the old story: when a friend asks you what he thinks a favour, the right thing is to grant it at once. He doesn't want your advice; he wants the one thing he asks for. There, get me the bills, and I'll draw

a cheque on Müller: Herries advised him by Saturday's post; so we can draw on Monday."

"All right, old man," said Severne, and went away briskly for the bills.

When he got from the balcony into the room, his steps flagged a little; it struck him that ink takes time to dry, and more time to darken.

As the Rover, with her nimble cargoes, was first cousin to the Flying Dutchman, with his crew of ghosts, so the bills received by Severne as purchase-money for his ship, necessarily partook of that ship's aerial character. Indeed they existed, as the schoolmen used to say, *in posse*, but not *in esse*. To be less pedantic and more exact, they existed as slips of blank paper with a Government stamp. To give them a mercantile character for a time—viz., until presented for payment—they must be drawn by an imaginary shipowner or a visionary merchant, and endorsed by at least one shadow and a man of straw.

The man of straw sat down to inscribe self and shadows, and became a dishonest writer of fiction; for the art he now commenced appears to fall short of forgery proper, but to be still more distinct from justifiable fiction. The ingenious Mr Defoe's certificate by an aerial justice

of the peace to the truth of his ghostly narrative comes nearest to it in my poor reading.

Qualms he had, but not deep. If the bills were drawn by Imagination, accepted by Fancy, and endorsed by Impudence, what did it matter to Ned Straw, since his system would enable him to redeem them at maturity? His only real concern was to conceal their recent origin. So he wrote them with a broad-nibbed pen, that they might be the blacker, and set them to dry in the sun.

He then proceeded to a change of toilet.

While thus employed, there was a sharp tap at his door, and Vizard's voice outside. Severne started with terror, snapped up the three bills with the dexterity of a conjuror—the handle turned—he shoved them into a drawer—Vizard came in—he shut the drawer, and panted.

Vizard had followed the custom of Oxonians, amongst themselves, which is to knock, and then come in, unless forbidden.

"Come," said he, cheerfully, "those bills; I'm in a hurry to cash them now, and end the only difference we have ever had, old fellow."

The blood left Severne's cheek and lips for a moment, and he thought swiftly and hard. The

blood returned, along with his ready wit. "How good you are!" said he: "but no; it is Sunday."

"Sunday!" shouted Vizard. "What is that to you, a fellow who has been years abroad?"

"I can't help it," said Severne, apologetically. "I am superstitious—don't like to do business on a Sunday. I would not even shunt at the tables on a Sunday—I don't think."

"Ah, you are not quite sure of that; there *is* a limit to your superstition! Well, will you listen to a story on a Sunday?"

"Rather."

"Then, once on a time there was a Scotch farmer who had a bonny cow; and another farmer coveted her honestly. One Sunday they went home together from kirk, and there was the cow grazing. Farmer 2 stopped, eyed her, and said to Farmer 1,—'Gin it were Monday, as it is the Sabba' day, what would ye tak' for your coo?' The other said the price would be nine pounds, *if it was Monday.* And so they kept the Sabbath; and the cow changed hands, though, to the naked eye, she grazed on *in situ.* Our negotiation is just as complete. So what does it matter whether the actual exchange of bills and cash takes place to-day or to-morrow?"

"Do you really mean to say it does not matter to you?" asked Severne.

"Not one straw."

"Then, as it does not matter to you, and does to me, give me my foolish way, like a dear good fellow."

"Now, that is smart," said Vizard—"very smart;" then, with a look of parental admiration, —"he gets his own way in everything. He *will* have your money—he *won't* have your money. I wonder whether he *will* consent to walk those girls out, and disburden me of their too profitable discourse."

"That I will, with pleasure."

"Well, they are at luncheon—with their bonnets on."

"I will join them in five minutes."

After luncheon, Miss Vizard, Miss Dover, and Mr Severne started for a stroll.

Miss Maitland suggested that Vizard should accompany them.

"Couldn't think of deserting you," said he, drily.

The young ladies giggled, because these two rarely opened their mouths to agree,—one being

a professed woman-hater, and the other a man-hater.

Says Misander, in a sourish way, "Since you value my conversation so, perhaps you will be good enough not to smoke for the next ten minutes."

Misogyn consented, but sighed. That sigh went unpitied, and the lady wasted no time.

"Do you see what is going on between your sister and that young man?"

"Yes; a little flirtation."

"A great deal more than that. I caught them, in this very room, making love."

"You alarm me," said Vizard, with marked tranquillity.

"I saw him—kiss—her—hand."

"You relieve me," said Vizard, as calmly as he had been alarmed. "There's no harm in that. I've kissed the Queen's hand, and the nation did not rise upon me. However, I object to it; the superior sex should not play the spaniel. I will tell him to drop that. But, permit me to say all this is in your department, not mine."

"But what can I do against three of them, unless you support me? There you have let them go out together."

"Together with Fanny Dover, you mean?"

"Yes; and if Fanny had any designs on him Zoe would be safe——"

"And poor Ned torn in two."

"But Fanny, I am grieved to say, seems inclined to assist this young man with Zoe; that is, because it does not matter to her. She has other views—serious ones."

"Serious! What? A nunnery? Then I pity my lady abbess."

"Her views are plain enough to anybody but you."

"Are they? Then make me as wise as my neighbours."

"Well, then, she means to marry *you*."

"What! Oh, come!—that is too good a joke!"

"It is sober earnest. Ask Zoe—ask your friend Mr Severne—ask the chamber-maids—ask any creature with an eye in its head. Oh the blindness of you men!"

The Misogyn was struck dumb. When he recovered, it was to repine at the lot of man.

"Even my own familiar cousin — once removed—in whom I trusted! I depute you to inform her that I think her *adorable*, and that matrimony is no longer a habit of mine. Set

her on to poor Severne; he is a ladies' man, and 'the more the merrier' is his creed."

"Such a girl as Fanny is not to be diverted from a purpose of that sort. Besides, she has too much sense to plunge into the Severne and —pauperism! She is bent on a rich husband, not a needy adventurer."

"Madam, in my friend's name, I thank you."

"You are very welcome, sir—it is only the truth." Then, with a swift return to her original topic: "No; I know perfectly well what Fanny Dover will do this afternoon. She sketches."

"It is too true," said Vizard, dolefully: "showed me a ship in full sail, and I praised it *in my way.* I said, 'That rock is rather well done.'"

"Well, she will be seized with a desire to sketch. She will sit down apart, and say: 'Please don't watch me—it makes me nervous.' The other two will take the hint, and make love a good way off; and Zoe will go greater lengths, with another woman in sight—but only just in sight, and slyly encouraging her—than if she was quite alone with her *mauvais sujet.*"

Vizard was pleased with the old lady.

"This is sagacious," said he, "and shows an eye for detail. I recognise in your picture the

foxy sex. But, at this moment, who can foretell which way the wind will blow? You are not aware, perhaps, that Zoe and Fanny have had a quarrel. They don't speak. Now, in women, you know, vices are controlled by vices—see Pope. The conspiracy you dread will be averted by the other faults of their character, their jealousy, and their petulant tempers. Take my word for it, they are sparring at this moment; and that poor, silly Severne mediating and moderating, and getting scratched on both sides for trying to be just."

At this moment the door opened, and Fanny Dover glittered on the threshold in Cambridge blue.

"There," said Vizard; "did not I tell you? They are come home."

"Only me," said Fanny, gaily.

"Where are the others?" inquired Miss Maitland, sharply.

"Not far off—only by the river-side."

"And you left those two alone!"

"Now don't be cross, aunt," cried Fanny, and limped up to her. "These new boots are so tight, I really couldn't bear them any longer. I believe I shall be lame as it is."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself. What will the people say?"

"La, aunt! it is Abroad. One does what one likes—out of England."

"Here's a code of morals!" said Vizard, who must have his slap.

"Nonsense," said Miss Maitland; "she will be sure to meet somebody. All England is on the Rhine at this time of year; and, whether or no, is it for you to expose that child to familiarity with a person nobody knows, nor his family either? You are twenty-five years old; you know the world; you have as poor an opinion of the man as I have, or you would have set your own cap at him—you know you would; and you have let out things to me when you were off your guard. Fanny Dover, you are behaving wickedly; you are a false friend to that poor girl."

Upon this, lo! the pert Fanny, hitherto so ready with her answers, began to cry bitterly; the words really pricked her conscience; and to be scolded is one thing, to be severely and solemnly reproached is another—and before a man!

The official woman-hater was melted in a

moment by the saucy girl's tears. "There—there," said he, kindly; "have a little mercy. Hang it all! don't make a mountain of a mole-hill."

The official man-hater never moved a muscle. "It is no use her crying to *me:* she must give me a *proof* she is sorry. Fanny, if you are a respectable girl, and have any idea of being my heir, go you this moment and bring them home."

"Yes, aunt," said Fanny, eagerly; and went off with wonderful alacrity.

It was a very long apartment, full forty feet; and while Fanny bustled down it, Miss Maitland extended a skinny finger, like one of Macbeth's witches, and directed Vizard's eye to the receding figure so pointedly, that he put up his spy-glass the better to see the phenomenon.

As Fanny skipped out and closed the door, Miss Maitland turned to Vizard, with lean finger still pointing after Fanny, and uttered a monosyllable—

"LAME!"

Vizard burst out laughing. "*La fourbe!*" said he. "Miss Maitland, accept my compliments; you possess the key to a sex no fellow can unlock. And now I have found an inter-

preter, I begin to be interested in this little comedy. The first act is just over. There will be half an hour's wait till the simulatrix of infirmity comes running back with the pilgrims of the Rhine. Are they 'the pilgrims of the Rhine' or 'the pilgrims of Love'? Time will show. Play to recommence with a verbal encounter: you will be one against three; for all that, I don't envy the greater number."

"Three to one? No. Surely you will be on the right side for once."

"Well, you see, I am the audience. We can't be all *dramatis personæ*, and no spectator. During the wait, I wonder whether the audience, having nothing better to do, may be permitted to smoke a cigar."

"So long a lucid interval is irksome, of course. Well, the balcony is your smoking-room. You will see them coming; please tap at my door the moment you do."

Half an hour elapsed, an hour, and the personages required to continue the comedy did not return.

Vizard, having nothing better to do, fell to thinking of Ina Klosking, and that was not good for him. Solitude and *ennui* fed his mania, and

at last it took the form of action. He rang, and ordered up his man Harris, a close, discreet personage, and directed him to go over to Homburg and bring back all the information he could about the new singer; her address in Homburg, married or single, prude or coquette. Should information be withheld, Harris was to fee the porter at the opera-house, the waiter at her hotel, and all the human commodities that knew anything about her.

Having dismissed Harris, he lighted his seventh cigar, and said to himself, "It is all Ned Severne's fault. I wanted to leave for England to-day."

The day had been overcast for some time, and now a few big drops fell, by way of warning. Then it turned cool; then came a light drizzling rain, and, in the middle of this, Fanny Dover appeared, almost flying home.

Vizard went and tapped at Miss Maitland's door. She came out.

"Here's Miss Dover coming, but she is alone."

CHAPTER VI.

THE next moment Fanny bounced into the room, and started a little at the picture of the pair ready to receive her; she did not wait to be taken to task, but proceeded to avert censure, by volubility and self-praise. "Aunt, I went down to the river, where I left them, and looked all along it, and they were not in sight. Then I went to the cathedral, because that seemed the next likeliest place. Oh, I have had such a race!"

"Why did you come back before you had found them?"

"Aunt, it was going to rain; and it is raining now, hard."

"*She* does not mind that."

"Zoe? Oh, she has got nothing on!"

"Bless me!" cried Vizard. "Godiva *rediviva*."

"Now, Harrington, don't: of course I mean nothing to spoil; only her purple alpaca, and that is two years old. But my blue silk, I can't afford to ruin *it*. Nobody would give me another, *I* know."

"What a heartless world," said Vizard, drily.

"It is past a jest, the whole thing," objected Miss Maitland: "and now we are together, please tell me, if you can, either of you, who *is* this man? What are his means? I know 'the Peerage,' 'the Baronetage,' and 'the Landed Gentry,' but not Severne. That is a river, not a family."

"Oh," said Vizard, "family names taken from rivers are never *parvenues*. But we can't all be down in Burke. Ned is of a good stock, the old English yeoman, the country's pride."

"Yeoman?" said the Maitland, with sovereign contempt.

Vizard resisted. "Is this the place to sneer at an English yeoman, where you see an unprincely prince living by a gambling-table? What says the old stave?—

> 'A German prince, a marquis of France,
> And a laird o' the North Countrie;
> A yeoman o' Kent, with his yearly rent,
> Would ding 'm out, all three.'"

"Then," said Misander, with a good deal of malicious intent, "you are quite sure your yeoman is not a—*pauper*—an *adventurer*——"

"Positive."

"And a *gambler*."

"No, I am not at all sure of that. But nobody is all-wise. I am not, for one. He is a fine fellow; as good as gold; as true as steel: always polite, always genial; and never speaks ill of any of you behind your backs."

Miss Maitland bridled at that. "What I have said is not out of dislike to the young man. I am warning a brother to take a little more care of his sister, that is all. However, after your sneer, I shall say no more behind Mr Severne's back, but to his face,—that is, if we ever see his face again, or Zoe's either."

"Oh, aunt!" said Fanny, reproachfully. "It is only the rain. La, poor things, they will be wet to the skin! Just see how it is pouring!"

"That it is: and let me tell you there is nothing so dangerous as a *tête-à-tête* in the rain."

"A thunderstorm is worse, aunt," said Fanny, eagerly, "because then she is frightened to death, and clings to him—*if he is nice*."

Having galloped into this revelation, through speaking first and thinking afterwards, Fanny pulled up short the moment the words were out, and turned red, and looked askant, under her pale lashes, at Vizard. Observing several twinkles in his eyes, she got up hastily, and said she really must go and dry her gown.

"Yes," said Miss Maitland, "come into my room, dear."

Fanny complied, with rather a rueful face, not doubting that the public "dear" was to get it rather hot in private.

Her uneasiness was not lessened when the old maid said to her, grimly, "Now sit you down there, and never mind your dress."

However, it came rather mildly, after all. "Fanny, you are not a bad girl, and you have shown you were sorry: so I am not going to be hard on you; only you must be a good girl now, and help me to undo the mischief, and then I will forgive you."

"Aunt," said Fanny, piteously, "I am older than she is, and I know I have done rather wrong, and I won't do it any more; but pray, pray, don't ask me to be unkind to her to-day: it is Broach-day."

Miss Maitland only stared at this obscure announcement: so Fanny had to explain that Zoe and she had tiffed, and made it up, and Zoe had given her a brooch. Hereupon she went for it, and both ladies forgot the topic they were on, and every other, to examine the brooch.

"Aunt," says Fanny, handling the brooch, and eyeing it, "you were a poor girl, like me, before grandpapa left you the money, and you know it is just as well to have a tiff now and then with a rich one, because, when you kiss and make it up, you always get some Reconciliation Thing or other."

Miss Maitland dived into the past and nodded approval.

Thus encouraged, Fanny proceeded to more modern rules. She let Miss Maitland know it was always understood at her school that on these occasions of tiff, reconciliation, and present, the girl, who received the present, was to side in everything with the girl who gave it, for that one day. "That is the real reason I put on my tight boots—to earn my broach. Isn't it a duck?"

"*Are* they tight, then?"

"Awfully. See—new on to-day."

"But you could shake off your lameness in a moment."

"La, aunt, you know one can fight *with* that sort of thing, or fight *against* it. It is like colds, and headaches, and fevers, and all that. You are in bed, too ill to see anybody you don't much care for. Night comes, and then you jump up and dress, and go to a ball, and leave your cold and your fever behind you, because the ball won't wait till you are well, and the bores will. So don't ask me to be unkind to Zoe, broach-day," said Fanny, skipping back to her first position with singular pertinacity.

"Now, Fanny," said Miss Maitland, "who wants you to be unkind to her? But you must and shall promise me not to lend her any more downright encouragement, and to watch the man well."

"I promise that faithfully," said Fanny—an adroit concession, since she had been watching him like a cat a mouse for many days.

"Then you are a good girl; and to reward you I will tell you in confidence all the strange stories I have discovered to-day."

"Oh, do, aunt!" cried Fanny; and now her eyes began to sparkle with curiosity.

Miss Maitland then bade her observe that the bedroom window was not a French casement, but a double-sash window — closed at present because of the rain; but it had been wide open at the top all the time.

"Those two were smoking, and talking secrets; and, child," said the old lady, very impressively, "if you—want—to—know—what gentlemen really are, you must be out of sight, and listen to them, smoking. When I was a girl, the gentlemen came out in their true colours over their wine. Now they are as close as wax, drinking; and, even when they are tipsy, they keep their secrets. But once let them get by themselves and smoke, the very air is soon filled with scandalous secrets none of the ladies in the house ever dreamed of. Their real characters, their true histories, and their genuine sentiments, are locked up like that geni in the 'Arabian Nights,' and come out in smoke as he did." The old lady chuckled at her own wit, and the young one laughed to humour her. "Well, my dear, those two smoked, and revealed themselves — their real selves; and I listened and heard every word on the top of those drawers."

Fanny looked at the drawers. They were high.

"La, aunt, how ever did you get up there?"

"By a chair."

"Oh, fancy you perched up there, listening, at your age!"

"You need not keep throwing my age in my teeth. I am not so very old. Only I don't paint, and whiten, and wear false hair. There are plenty of coquettes about, ever so much older than I am. I have a great mind not to tell you; and then much you will ever know about either of these men."

"Oh, aunt, don't be cruel! I am dying to hear it."

As aunt was equally dying to tell it, she passed over the skit upon her age, though she did not forget, nor forgive it; and repeated the whole conversation of Vizard and Severne with rare fidelity; but, as I abhor what the evangelist calls "battology," and Shakespeare "damnable iteration," I must draw upon the intelligence of the reader (if any), and he must be pleased to imagine the whole dialogue of those two unguarded smokers, repeated to Fanny, and interrupted, commented on at every salient point,

scrutinised, sifted, dissected, and taken to pieces, by two keen women, sharp by nature, and sharper now by collision of their heads. No candour, no tolerance, no allowance for human weakness, blunted the scalpel in their dexterous hands.

Oh gossip! delight of ordinary souls, and more delightful still when you furnish food for detraction!!!

To Fanny, in particular, it was exciting, ravishing; and the time flew by so unheeded, that presently there came a sharp knock, and an impatient voice cried, "Chatter!—Chatter!—Chatter!—how long are we to be kept waiting for dinner, all of us?"

CHAPTER VII.

At the very commencement of the confabulation, so barbarously interrupted before it had lasted two hours and a half, the Misogyn rang the bell, and asked for Rosa, Zoe's maid.

She came, and he ordered her to have up a basket of wood, and light a roaring fire in her mistress's room, and put out garments to air. He also inquired the number of Zoe's bedroom. The girl said it was "No. 74."

The Misogyn waited half an hour, and then visited "No. 74." He found the fire burnt down to one log, and some things airing at the fire, as domestics air their employers' things, but not their own, you may be sure. There was a chemise carefully folded into the smallest possible compass, and doubled over a horse at a good distance from the cold fire. There were

other garments and supplementaries, all treated in the same way.

The Misogyn looked, and remarked as follows: "Idiots!—at everything, but taking in the men."

Having relieved his spleen with this courteous and comprehensive observation, he piled log upon log, till the fire was half up the chimney. Then he got all the chairs, and made a semicircle, and spread out the various garments to the genial heat; and so close that, had a spark flown, they would have been warmed with a vengeance, and the superiority of the male intellect demonstrated. This done, he retired, with a guilty air; for he did not want to be caught meddling in such frivolities by Miss Dover or Miss Maitland. However, he was quite safe; those superior spirits were wholly occupied with the loftier things of the mind, especially the characters of their neighbours.

I must now go for these truants that are giving everybody so much trouble.

When Fanny fell lame, and said she was very sorry, but she must go home and change her boots, Zoe was for going home too. But Fanny, doubting her sincerity, was peremptory, and

said they had only to stroll slowly on, and then turn; she should meet them coming back. Zoe coloured high, suspecting they had seen the last of this ingenious young lady.

"What a good girl!" cried Severne.

"I am afraid she is a very naughty girl," said Zoe, faintly; and the first effect of Fanny's retreat was to make her a great deal more reserved and less sprightly.

Severne observed, and understood, and saw he must give her time. He was so respectful, as well as tender, that, by degrees, she came out again, and beamed with youth and happiness.

They strolled very slowly by the fair river, and the pretty little nothings they said to each other began to be mere vehicles for those soft tones and looks, in which love is made, far more than by the words themselves.

When they started on this walk, Severne had no distinct nor serious views on Zoe. But he had been playing with fire for some time, and so now he got well burnt.

Walking slowly by his side, and conscious of being wooed, whatever the words might be, Zoe was lovelier than ever. Those lowered lashes, that mantling cheek, those soft, tender

murmurs, told him he was dear, and thrilled his heart, though a cold one compared with hers.

He was in love—as much as he could be, and more than he had ever been before. He never even asked himself whether permanent happiness was likely to spring from this love: he was self-indulgent, reckless, and in love.

He looked at her, wished he could recall his whole life, and sighed.

"Why do you sigh?" said she, gently.

"I don't know. Yes, I do. Because I am not happy."

"Not happy?" said she. "You ought to be; and I am sure you deserve to be."

"I don't know that. However, I think I shall be happier in a few minutes, or else very unhappy indeed. That depends on you."

"On me, Mr Severne?" and she blushed crimson, and her bosom began to heave. His words led her to expect a declaration and a proposal of marriage.

He saw her mistake; and her emotion spoke so plainly, and sweetly, and tried him so, that it cost him a great effort not to clasp her in his arms. But that was not his cue at present. He

lowered his eyes, to give her time, and said, sadly, "I cannot help seeing that, somehow, there is suspicion in the air about me. Miss Maitland puts questions, and drops hints. Miss Dover watches me like a lynx. Even you gave me a hint the other day that I never talk to you about my relations, and my past life."

"Pray do not confound me with other people," said Zoe, proudly. "If I am curious, it is because I know you must have done many good things, and clever things; but you have too little vanity, or too much pride, to tell them even to one who—esteems you, and could appreciate."

"I know you are as generous and noble as most people are narrow-minded," said Severne, enthusiastically; "and I have determined to tell you all about myself."

Zoe's cheeks beamed with gratified pride, and her eyes sparkled.

"Only, as I would not tell it to anybody but you, I must stipulate that you receive it in sacred confidence, and not repeat it to a living soul."

"Not even to my brother, who loves you so?"

"Not even to him."

This alarmed the instinctive delicacy and modesty of a truly virgin soul.

"I am not experienced," said she. "But I feel I ought not to yield to curiosity, and hear from you anything I am forbidden to tell my brother. You might as well say I must not tell my mother; for dear Harrington is all the mother I have; and I am sure he is a true friend to you" (this last a little reproachfully).

But for Severne's habitual self-command, he would have treated this delicacy as ridiculous prudery; but he was equal to greater difficulties.

"You are right, by instinct, in everything. Well, then, I shall tell you, and you shall see at once whether it ought to be repeated, or to remain a sacred deposit between me and the only creature I have the courage to tell it to."

Zoe lowered her eyes, and marked the sand with her parasol. She was a little puzzled now, and half conscious that, somehow, he was tying her to secrecy with silk instead of rope; but she never suspected the deliberate art and dexterity with which it was done.

Severne then made the revelation, which he had been preparing for a day or two past: and, to avoid eternal comments by the author, I must

once more call in the artful aid of the printers. The true part of Mr Severne's revelation is in italics; the false in ordinary type.

"*When my father died, I inherited an estate in Huntingdonshire. It was not so large as Vizard's, but it was clear. Not a mortgage nor encumbrance on it. I had a younger brother;* a fellow with charming manners, and very accomplished. These were his ruin: he got into high society in London: *but high society is not always good society.* He became connected with a fast lot, some of the young nobility. Of course he could not vie with them. He got deeply in debt. Not but what they were in debt too, every one of them. He used to send to me for money oftener than I liked; but I never suspected the rate he was going at. I was anxious, too, about him; but I said to myself he was just sowing his wild oats, like other fellows. Well, it went on, until—to his misfortune, and mine—he got entangled in some disgraceful transactions; the general features are known to all the world. I daresay you have heard of one or two young noblemen who committed forgeries on their relations and friends some years ago. *One of them, the son of an earl, took his sister's whole*

fortune out of her bank, with a single forged cheque. I believe the sum total of his forgeries was over £100,000. *His father could not find half the money. A number of the nobility had to combine to repurchase the documents; many of them were in the hands of the Jews; and I believe a composition was effected, with the help of a very powerful barrister, an M.P. He went out of his line on this occasion, and mediated between the parties.* What will you think when I tell you that my brother, the son of my father and my mother, was one of these forgers; a criminal?"

"My poor friend!" cried Zoe, clasping her innocent hands.

"It was a thunder-clap. I had a great mind to wash my hands of it, and let him go to prison. But how could I? The struggle ended in my doing like the rest. Only poor I had no noble kinsmen with long purses to help me, and no Solicitor-General to mediate *sub rosa*. The total amount would have swamped my family acres. I got them down to sixty per cent, and that only crippled my estate for ever. As for my brother, he fell on his knees to me. But I could not forgive him. *He left the country*

with a hundred pounds I gave him. *He is in Canada: and only known there as a most respectable farmer.* He talks of paying me back. That I shall believe when I see it. All I know for certain is that his crime has mortgaged my estate, and left me poor—and suspected."

Whilst Severne related this, there passed a somewhat notable thing in the world of mind. The inventor of this history did not understand it; the hearer did, and accompanied it with innocent sympathetic sighs. Her imagination, more powerful and precise than the inventor's, pictured the horror of the high-minded brother, his agony, his shame, his respect for law and honesty, his pity for his own flesh and blood, his struggle, and the final triumph of fraternal affection. Every line of the figment was alive to her, and she *realised* the tale. Severne only repeated it.

At the last touch of his cold art, the warm-hearted girl could contain no longer.

"Oh! poor Mr Severne!" she cried; "poor Mr Severne!" and the tears ran down her cheeks.

He looked at her first with a little astonishment,—fancy taking his little narrative to heart like that!—then with compunction, and then

with a momentary horror at himself, and terror at the impassable gulf fixed between them, by her rare goodness and his depravity.

Then for a moment he felt; and felt all manner of things at once. "Oh, don't cry," he blurted out, and began to blubber himself at having made her cry at all, and so unfairly. It was his lucky hour; this hysterical effusion, undignified by a single grain of active contrition, or even penitent resolve, told in his favour. They mingled their tears; and hearts cannot hold aloof, when tears come together. Yes, they mingled their tears, and the crocodile tears were the male's, if you please, and the woman's tears were pure holy drops, that angels might have gathered, and carried them to God for pearls of the human soul.

After they had cried together over the cool figment, Zoe said: "I do not repent my curiosity now. You did well to tell me. Oh no, you were right, and I will never tell anybody. People are narrow-minded. They shall never cast your brother's crime in your teeth, nor your own losses I esteem you for—oh so much more than ever! I wonder you could tell me."

"You would not wonder if you knew how superior you are to all the world: how noble, how generous, and how I——"

"Oh, Mr Severne, it is going to rain. We must get home as fast as ever we can."

They turned, and Zoe, with true virgin coyness, and elastic limbs, made the coming rain an excuse for such swift walking, that Severne could not make tender love to her. To be sure Apollo ran after Daphne, with his little proposals; but I take it he ran mute—till he found he couldn't catch her. Indeed it was as much as Severne could do to keep up with her "fair heel and toe." But I ascribe this to her not wearing high heels, ever since Fanny told her she was just a little too tall, and she was novice enough to believe her.

She would not stop for the drizzle; but at last it came down with such a vengeance, that she was persuaded to leave the path and run for a cattle-shed at some distance. Here she and Severne were imprisoned. Luckily for them "the kye had not come hame," and the shed was empty. They got into the farthest corner of it; for it was all open towards the river; and the rain pattered on the roof as if it would break it.

Thus driven together, was it wonderful that soon her hand was in his, and that, as they purred together, and murmured soft nothings, she was once surprised into returning the soft pressure which he gave it so often?

The plump declaration she had fled from, and now seemed deliciously resigned to, did not actually come. But he did what she valued more, he resumed his confidences: told her he had vices: was fond of gambling. Excused it on the score of his loss by his brother. Said he hoped soon to hear good news from Canada. Didn't despair. Was happy now, in spite of all. Had been happy ever since he had met *her*. What declaration was needed? The understanding was complete. Neither doubted the other's love; and Zoe would have thought herself a faithless, wicked girl, if, after this, she had gone and accepted any other man.

But presently she had a misgiving, and looked at her watch. Yes, it wanted but one hour to dinner. Now her brother was rather a Tartar about punctuality at dinner. She felt she was already in danger of censure for her long *tête-à-tête* with Severne, though the rain was the culprit. She could not afford to draw every eye

upon her by being late for dinner along with him.

She told Severne they must go home now, rain or no rain; and she walked resolutely out into the weather.

Severne did not like it at all, but he was wise enough to deplore it only on her account; and indeed her light alpaca was soon drenched, and began to cling to her.

But the spirited girl only laughed at his condolences, as she hurried on. "Why, it is only warm water," said she: "this is no more than a bath in the summer sea. Bathing is getting wet through in blue flannel. Well, I am bathing in blue alpaca."

"But it will ruin your dress."

"My dress! why, it is as old as the hills. When I get home I'll give it to Rosa—ready washed, ha! ha!"

The rain pelted and poured, and long before they reached the inn, Zoe's dress had become an external cuticle, an alpaca skin.

But innocence is sometimes very bold. She did not care a bit: and, to tell the truth, she had little need to care. Beauty so positive as hers is indomitable. The petty accidents that are the

terrors of homely charms, seem to enhance Queen Beauty. Dishevelled hair adorns it: close-bound hair adorns it. Simplicity adorns it. Diamonds adorn it. Everything seems to adorn it, because the truth is, it adorns everything. And so Zoe, drenched with rain, and her dress a bathing-gown, was only a Greek goddess tinted blue, her bust and shoulders and her moulded figure covered, yet revealed. What was she to an artist's eye? Just the Townly Venus with her sculptor's cunning draperies, and Juno's gait.

"Et vera incessa patuit Dea."

When she got to the hotel she held up her finger to Severne with a pretty peremptoriness. She had shown him so much tenderness, she felt she had a right to order him now: "I must beg of you," said she, "to go straight to your room and dress very quickly, and present yourself to Harrington five minutes before dinner at least."

"I will obey," said he, obsequiously.

That pleased her, and she kissed her hand to him, and scudded to her own room.

At sight of the blazing fire and provident preparations, she started, and said aloud, "Oh, how nice of them!" and, all dripping as she was,

she stood there with her young heart in a double glow.

Such a nature as hers has too little egotism, and low-bred vanity, to undervalue worthy love. The infinite heart of a Zoe Vizard can love but one with passion, yet ever so many more with warm and tender affection.

She gave aunt Maitland credit for this provident affection. It was out of the sprightly Fanny's line; and she said to herself, "Dear old thing! there, I thought she was bottling up a lecture for me, and all the time her real anxiety was lest I should be wet through." Thereupon she settled in her mind to begin loving aunt Maitland from that hour. She did not ring for her maid till she was nearly dressed; and when Rosa came and exclaimed at the condition of her cast-off robes, she laughed, and told her it was nothing,—the Rhine was nice and warm,—pretending she had been in it. She ordered her to dry the dress, and iron it.

"Why, la, miss; you'll never wear it again, to be sure?" said Rosa, demurely.

"I don't know," said the young lady, archly; "but I mean to take great care of it," and burst out laughing like a peal of silver bells, because

she was in high spirits, and saw what Rosa would be at.

Give away the gown she had been wooed and wet through in—no, thank you! Such gowns as these be land-marks, my masters.

Vizard, unconscious of her arrival, was walking up and down the room, fidgeting more and more, when in came Zoe, dressed high in black silk and white lace, looking ever so cosy, and blooming like a rose.

"What!" said he: "in, and dressed." He took her by the shoulders, and gave her a great kiss. "You young monkey," said he, "I was afraid you were washed away."

Zoe suggested that would only have been a woman obliterated.

"That is true," said he, with an air of hearty conviction. "I forgot that."

He then inquired if she had had a nice walk.

"Oh, beautiful; imprisoned half the time in a cow-shed, and then drenched. But I'll have a nice walk with you, dear, up and down the room."

"Come on, then."

So she put her right hand on his left shoulder, and gave him her left hand, and they walked up

and down the room, Zoe beaming with happiness and affection for everybody, and walking at a graceful bend.

Severne came in, dressed, and perfect as though just taken out of a band-box. He sat down at a little table, and read a little journal unobtrusively. It was his cue to divest his late *tête-à-tête* of public importance.

Then came dinner, and two of the party absent. Vizard heard their voices going like mill-clacks at this sacred hour, and summoned them rather roughly, as stated above. His back was to Zoe, and she rubbed her hands gaily to Severne, and sent him a flying whisper, "Oh what fun! we are the culprits, and they are the ones scolded."

Dinner waited ten minutes, and then the defaulters appeared. Nothing was said, but Vizard looked rather glum; and aunt Maitland cast a vicious look at Severne and Zoe: they had made a forced march and outflanked her. She sat down and bided her time, like a fowler waiting till the ducks come within shot.

But the conversation was commonplace, inconsecutive, shifty, and vague, and it was two hours before anything came within shot: all

this time not a soul suspected the ambushed fowler.

At last Vizard having thrown out one of his hints that the fair sex are imperfect, Fanny, being under the influence of Miss Maitland's revelations, ventured to suggest that they had no more faults than men, and *certainly* were not more deceitful.

"Indeed?" said Vizard. "Not — more — *deceitful!* Do you speak from experience?"

"Oh no, no;" said Fanny, getting rather frightened. "I only think so, somehow."

"Well, but you must have a reason. May I respectfully inquire whether more men have jilted you, than you have jilted?"

"You may inquire as respectfully as you like; but I shan't tell you."

"That is right, Miss Dover," said Severne: "don't you put up with his nonsense. He knows nothing about it: women are angels, compared with men. The wonder is, how they can waste so much truth, and constancy, and beauty, upon the foul sex. To my mind, there is only one thing we beat you in; we do stick by each other rather better than you do. You are truer to us; we are a little truer to each other."

"Not a little," suggested Vizard, drily.

"For my part," said Zoe, blushing pink at her boldness in advancing an opinion on so large a matter, "I think these comparisons are rather narrow-minded: what have *we* to do with bad people, male or female? A good man is good, and a good woman is good: still I do think that women have greater hearts to love, and men, perhaps, greater hearts for friendship:" then, blushing roseate, "even in the short time we have been here we have seen two gentlemen give up pleasure for self-denying friendship. Lord Uxmoor gave us all up for a sick friend. Mr Severne did more, perhaps; for he lost that divine singer;—you will never hear her now, Mr Severne."

The Maitland gun went off. "A sick friend! —Mr Severne?—ha! ha! ha! You silly girl, he has got no sick friend. He was at the gaming-table. That was his sick friend."

It was an effective discharge. It winged a duck or two. It killed, as follows; the tranquillity—the good-humour—and the content of the little party.

Severne started, and stared, and lost colour,

and then cast at Vizard a venomous look never seen on his face before; for he naturally concluded that Vizard had betrayed him.

Zoe was amazed, looked instantly at Severne, saw it was true, and turned pale at his evident discomfiture. Her lover had been guilty of deceit—mean and rather heartless deceit.

Even Fanny winced at the point-blank denunciation of a young man, who was himself polite to everybody. She would have done it in a very different way—insinuations, innuendo, &c.

"They have found you out, old fellow," said Vizard, merrily; "but you need not look as if you had robbed a church. Hang it all! a fellow has a right to gamble, if he chooses. Any way, he paid for his whistle; for he lost three hundred pounds."

"Three hundred pounds!" cried the terrible old maid. "Where ever did he get them to lose?"

Severne divined that he had nothing to gain by fiction here; so he said, sullenly, "I got them from Vizard; but I gave him value for them."

"You need not publish our private transactions, Ned," said Vizard. "Miss Maitland, this is really not in your department."

"Oh yes, it is," said she; "and so you'll find."

This pertinacity looked like defiance. Vizard rose from his chair, bowed ironically, with the air of a man not disposed for a hot argument. "In that case—with permission—I'll withdraw to my veranda, and, in that—(he struck a light—) peaceful—(here he took a suck—) shade——"

"You will meditate on the charms of Ina Klosking."

Vizard received this poisoned arrow in the small of the back, as he was sauntering out. He turned swiftly, as if a man had struck him, and, for a single moment, he looked downright terrible, and wonderfully unlike the easy-going Harrington Vizard. But he soon recovered himself. "What! you listen, do you?" said he; and turned contemptuously on his heel without another word.

There was an uneasy, chilling pause. Miss Maitland would have given something to withdraw her last shot. Fanny was very uncomfortable, and fixed her eyes on the table. Zoe, deeply shocked at Severne's deceit, was now amazed and puzzled about her brother. "Ina Klosking!" inquired she; "who is that?"

"Ask Mr Severne," said Miss Maitland, sturdily.

Now Mr Severne was sitting silent, but with restless eyes meditating how he should get over that figment of his about the sick friend.

Zoe turned round on him, fixed her glorious eyes full upon his face, and said, rather imperiously, "Mr Severne, who is Ina Klosking?"

Mr Severne looked up blankly in her face, and said nothing.

She coloured at not being answered, and repeated her question (all this time Fanny's eyes were fixed on the young man even more keenly than Zoe's), "who—and what—is Ina Klosking?"

"She is a public singer."

"Do you know her?"

"Yes; I heard her sing at Vienna."

"Yes, yes; but do you know her to speak to?"

He considered half a moment, and then said he had not that honour. "But," said he, rather hurriedly, "somebody or other told me she had come out at the opera here, and made a hit."

"What, in Siebel?"

"I don't know; but I saw large bills out

with her name. She made her *début* in Gounod's 'Faust.'"

"It is *my* Siebel!" cried Zoe, rapturously. "Why, aunt, no wonder Harrington admires her. For my part, I adore her."

"*You*, child! That is quite a different matter."

"No, it is not. He is like me; he has only seen her once, as I have, and on the stage."

"Fiddle-de-dee. I tell you he is in love with her, over head and ears; he is wonderfully inflammable for a woman-hater. Ask Mr Severne; he knows."

"Mr Severne, is my brother in love with that lady?"

Severne's turn had come; that able young man saw his chance, and did as good a bit of acting as ever was extemporised even by an Italian mime.

"Miss Vizard," said he, fixing his hazel eyes on her for the first time, in a way that made her feel his power, "what passed in confidence between two friends ought to be sacred. Don't —you—think so?" (The girl quivered, remembering the secret he had confessed to her.) "Miss Maitland has done your brother and me the honour to listen to our secrets. She shall repeat

them, if she thinks it delicate; but I shall not, without Vizard's consent; and, more than that, the conversation seems to me to be taking the turn of casting blame, and ridicule, and I don't know what, on the best-hearted, kindest-hearted, truest-hearted, noblest, and manliest man I know. I decline to take any further share in it."

With these last words in his mouth, he stuck his hands defiantly into his pockets, and stalked out into the veranda, looking every inch a man.

Zoe folded her arms, and gazed after him with undisguised admiration. How well everything he did became him! his firing up—his brusquerie—the very movements of his body, all so piquant, charming, and unwomanly. As he vanished from her admiring eyes, she turned, with flaming cheeks, on Miss Maitland, and said, "Well, aunt, you have driven them both out at the window; now, say something pretty to Fanny and me, and drive us out at the door."

Miss Maitland hung her head; she saw she had them all against her but Fanny, and Fanny was a trimmer. She said, sorrowfully, "No, Zoe. I feel how unattractive I have made the room. I have driven away the gods of your idolatry—they are only idols of clay; but that

you can't believe. I will banish nobody else, except a cross-grained but respectable old woman, who is too experienced, and too much soured by it, to please young people when things are going wrong."

With this she took her bed-candle, and retired.

Zoe had an inward struggle. As Miss Maitland opened her bedroom door, she called to her, "Aunt! one word. Was it you that ordered the fire in my bedroom?"

Now, if she had received the answer she expected, she meant to say, "Then please let me forget everything else you have said or done to-day." But Miss Maitland stared a little, and said, "Fire in your bedroom; no."

"Oh!—then I have nothing to thank you for this day," said Zoe, with all the hardness of youth; though, as a general rule, she had not her share of it.

The old lady winced visibly, but she made a creditable answer. "Then, my dear, you shall have my prayers this night; and it does not matter much whether you thank me for them or not."

As she disappeared, Zoe flung herself wearily on a couch, and very soon began to cry. Fanny

ran to her, and nestled close to her, and the two had a rock together, Zoe crying, and Fanny coaxing and comforting.

"Ah!" sighed Zoe; "this was the happiest day of my life; and see how it ends! Quarrelling, and deceit; the one I hate, the other I despise. No, never again, until I have said my prayers, and am just going to sleep, will I cry, 'O giorno felice!' as I did this afternoon, when the rain was pouring on me; but my heart was all in a glow."

These pretty little lamentations of youth were interrupted by Mr Severne slipping away from his friend, to try and recover lost ground.

He was coolly received by Zoe; then he looked dismayed, but affected not to understand; then Zoe pinched Fanny, which meant, "I don't choose to put him on his defence; but I am dying to hear if he has anything to say." Thereupon Fanny obeyed that significant pinch, and said, "Mr Severne, my cousin is not a woman of the world; she is a country girl with old-fashioned romantic notions that a man should be above telling fibs; I have known her longer than you, and I see she can't understand your passing off the gambling-table for a sick friend."

"Why, I never did," said he, as bold as brass.

"Mr Severne!"

"Miss Dover! My sick friend was at 'The Golden Star,' that's a small hotel in a different direction from the Kursaal. I was there from seven o'clock till nine. You ask the waiter if you don't believe me."

Fanny giggled at this inadvertent speech; but Zoe's feelings were too deeply engaged to shoot fun flying. "Fanny," cried she, eagerly, "I heard him tell the coachman to drive him to that very place, 'The Golden Star.'"

"Really?" said Fanny, mystified.

"Indeed I did, dear. I remember 'The Golden Star' distinctly."

"Ladies, I was there till nine o'clock. Then I started for the theatre. Unfortunately the theatre is attached to the Kursaal. I thought I would just look in for a few minutes. In fact I don't think I was there half an hour. But Miss Maitland is quite right in one thing. I lost more than two hundred pounds, all through playing on a false system. Of course I know I had no business to go there at all, when I might have been by your side."

"And heard La Klosking."

"It was devilish bad taste, and you may well be surprised and offended."

"No, no; not at that," said Zoe.

"But hang it all! don't make a fellow worse than he is. Why should I invent a sick friend? I suppose I have a right to go to the Kursaal if I choose. At any rate I mean to go to-morrow afternoon, and win a pot of money. Hinder me who can."

Zoe beamed with pleasure. "That spiteful old woman! I am ashamed of myself. Of course you *have*. It becomes a man to say *je veux;* and it becomes a woman to yield. Forgive our unworthy doubts. We will all go to the Kursaal to-morrow."

The reconciliation was complete; and to add to Zoe's happiness, she made a little discovery. Rosa came in to see if she wanted anything. That, you must know, was Rosa's way of saying, "It is very late. *I*'m tired; so the sooner *you* go to bed the better." And Zoe was by nature so considerate, that she often went to bed more for Rosa's convenience than her own inclination.

But this time she said, sharply, "Yes, I do. I

want to know who had my fire lighted for me in the middle of summer."

"Why, squire, to be sure," said Rosa.

"What! *my* brother?"

"Yes, miss; and seen to it all hisself: leastways I found the things properly muddled. 'Twas to be seen a man had been at 'em."

Rosa retired, leaving Zoe's face a picture.

Just then Vizard put his head cautiously in at the window, and said, in a comic whisper, "Is she gone?"

"Yes, she is gone," cried Zoe, "and you are wanted in her place." She ran to meet him. "Who ordered a fire in my room, and muddled all my things?" said she, severely.

"I did. What of that?"

"Oh, nothing; only now I know who is my friend. Young people, here's a lesson for you. When a lady is out in the rain, don't prepare a lecture for her, like aunt Maitland, but light her a fire, like this dear old duck of a woman-hating impostor. Kiss me!" (violently.)

"There—pest."

"That is not enough, nor half. There, and there, and there, and there, and there, and there."

"Now, look here, my young friend," said Viz-

ard, holding her lovely head by both ears; "you are exciting yourself about nothing, and that will end in one of your headaches. So just take your candle, and go to bed, like a good little girl."

"Must I? Well, then, I will. Good-bye, tyrant dear. Oh, how I love you! Come, Fanny."

She gave her hand shyly to Severne, and soon they were both in Zoe's room.

Rosa was dismissed, and they had their chat; but it was nearly all on one side. Fanny had plenty to say, but did not say it. She had not the heart to cloud that beaming face again so soon; she temporised: Zoe pressed her with questions too; but she slurred things. Zoe asked her why Miss Maitland was so bitter against poor Mr Severne: Fanny said, in an off-hand way, "Oh, it is only on your account she objects to him."

"And what are her objections?"

"Oh, only grammatical ones, dear. She says his *antecedents* are obscure, and his *relatives* unknown: ha, ha, ha!" Fanny laughed, but Zoe did not see the fun. Then Fanny stroked her down.

"Never mind that old woman. *I* shall inter-

fere properly, if I see you in danger: it was monstrous, her making an *esclandre* at the very dinner-table, and spoiling your happy day."

"But she hasn't," cried Zoe, eagerly. "'All's well that ends well.' I am happy — oh, so happy! You love me. Harrington loves me. *He* loves me. What more can any woman ask for than to be *amata bene?*"

This was the last word between Zoe and Fanny upon St Brooch's day.

As Fanny went to her own room, the vigilant Maitland opened her door that looked upon the corridor, and beckoned her in. "Well," said she, "did you speak to Zoe?"

"Just a word before dinner. Aunt, she came in wet to the skin, and in higher spirits than Rosa ever knew her."

Aunt groaned.

"And what do you think? Her spoiled dress, she ordered it to be ironed and put by. *It is a case.*"

Next day they all met at a late breakfast, and good-humour was the order of the day.

This encouraged Zoe to throw out a feeler about the gambling-tables. Then Fanny said

it must be nice to gamble, because it was so naughty. "In a long experience," said Miss Dover, with a sigh, "I have found that whatever is nice is naughty, and whatever is naughty is nice."

"There's a short code of morals," observed Vizard, "for the use of seminaries. Now let us hear Severne; he knows all the defences of gambling lunacy has discovered."

Severne, thus appealed to, said play was like other things, bad only when carried to excess. "At Homburg, where the play is fair, what harm can there be in devoting two or three hours of a long day to *trente et quarante?* The play exercises memory, judgment, *sang froid*, and other good qualities of the mind; above all, it is on the square. Now, buying and selling shares without delivery—bulling, and bearing, and rigging, and Stock Exchange speculations in general—are just as much gambling; but with cards all marked, and dice loaded—and a fair player has no chance. The world," said this youthful philosopher, "is taken in by words. The truth is, that gambling with cards is fair, and gambling without cards a swindle."

"He is hard upon the City," said the Vizard; "but no matter. Proceed, young man. Develop

your code of morals for the amusement of mankind, while duller spirits inflict instruction."

"You have got my opinion," said Severne; "oblige us with yours."

"No; mine would not be popular just now: I reserve it till we are there, and can see the lunatics at work."

"Oh, then we are to go!" cried Fanny. "Oh, be joyful!"

"That depends on Miss Maitland. It is not in my department."

Instantly four bright eyes were turned piteously on the awful Maitland.

"Oh, aunt," said Zoe, pleadingly, "*do* you think there would be any great harm in our—just for once in a way?"

"My dear," said Miss Maitland, solemnly, "I cannot say that I approve of public gambling in general. But at Homburg the company is select. I have seen a German prince, a Russian prince, and two English countesses, the very *élite* of London society, seated at the same table in the Kursaal. I think, therefore, there can be no harm in your going, under the conduct of older persons—myself, for example, and your brother."

"Code three," suggested Vizard—"the chaperonian code."

"And a very good one, too," said Zoe. "But, aunt, must we look on, or may we play, just a little, little?"

"My dear, there can be no great harm in playing a little, in *good company*—if you play with your own money." She must have one dig at Severne.

"I shan't play very deep then," said Fanny; "for I have got no money hardly."

Vizard came to the front, like a man. "No more should I," said he, "but for Herries & Co. As it is, I am a Crœsus, and I shall stand £100, which you three ladies must divide; and between you, no doubt, you will break the bank."

Acclamations greeted this piece of misogyny. When they had subsided, Severne was called on to explain the game, and show the young ladies how to win a fortune with £33, 6s. 8d.

The table was partly cleared, two packs of cards sent for, and the professor lectured. "This," said he, "is the cream of the game. Six packs are properly shuffled, and properly cut; the players put their money on black or red, which

is the main event, and is settled thus: The dealer deals the cards in two rows. He deals the *first* row for black, and stops the moment the cards pass thirty. That deal determines how near *noir* can get to thirty-one."

Severne then dealt for *noir*, and the cards came as follows :—

Queen of Hearts—four of Clubs—ten of Spades —nine of Diamonds : total, 33.

He then dealt for red :—

Knave of Clubs—ace of Diamonds—two of Spades — King of Spades — nine of Hearts : total, 32.

"Red wins, because the cards dealt for red come nearest thirty-one. Besides that," said he, "you can bet on the colour, or against it. The actual colour of the first card the player turns up on the black line must be black or red. Whichever happens to be it is called 'the colour.' Say it is red, then, if the black line of cards wins, colour loses. Now I will deal again for both events."

"I deal for *noir*."

"Nine of Diamonds. Red, then, is the actual colour turned up on the black line. Do you bet for it, or against it ?"

"I bet for it," cried Zoe. "It's my favourite colour."

"And what do you say on the main event?"

"Oh, red on that too."

"Very good. I go on dealing for *noir*. Queen of Diamonds, three of Spades, Knave of Hearts —thirty-two. That looks ugly for your two events, black coming so near as thirty-two. Now for red. Four of hearts, Knave of Spades, seven of Diamonds, Queen of Clubs—thirty-one, by Jove! *Rouge gagne et couleur*. There is nothing like courage. You have won both events."

"Oh, what a nice game!" cried Zoe.

He then continued to deal, and they all betted on the main event and the colour, staking fabulous sums, till at last both numbers came up thirty-one.

Thereupon Severne informed them that half the stakes belonged to him. That was the trifling advantage accorded to the bank.

"Which trifling advantage," said Vizard, "has enriched the man-eating company, and their prince, and built the Kursaal, and will clean you all out, if you play long enough."

"That," said Severne, "I deny; it is more than balanced by the right the players have

of doubling, till they gain, and by the maturity of the chances. I will explain this to the ladies: you see experience proves that neither red nor black can come up more than nine times running. When, therefore, either colour has come up four times, you can put a moderate stake on the other colour, and double on it till it *must* come, by the laws of nature. Say red has turned four times. You put a napoleon on black; red gains. You lose a napoleon. You don't remove it, but double on it. The chances are now five to one you gain: but if you lose, you double on the same, and, when you have got to sixteen napoleons, the colour must change; uniformity has reached its physical limit. That is called the maturity of the chances. Begin as unluckily as possible with five francs, and lose. If you have to double eight times before you win, it only comes to 1280 francs. Given, therefore, a man to whom fifty napoleons are no more than five francs to us, he can never lose if he doubles, like a Trojan, till the chances are mature. This is called 'the Martingale:' but observe, it only secures against loss. Heavy gains are made by doubling judiciously on the *winning* colour, or by simply betting on short runs of it.

When red comes up, back red, and double twice on it. Thus you profit by the remarkable and observed fact that the colours do not, as a rule, alternate, but reach ultimate equality by avoiding alternation, and making short runs, with occasional long runs; the latter are rare, and must be watched with a view to the balancing run of the other colour. This is my system."

"And you really think you have invented it?" asked Vizard.

"I am not so conceited. My system was communicated to me, in the Kursaal itself—by an old gentleman."

"*An* old gentleman, or *the?*"

"Oh, Harrington!" cried Zoe; "fie!"

"My wit is appreciated at its value. Proceed, Ned."

Severne told him, a little defiantly, it was an old gentleman, with a noble head, a silvery beard, and the most benevolent countenance he ever saw.

"Curious place for his reverence to be in," hazarded Vizard.

"He saw me betting, first on the black, then on the red, till I was cleaned out, and then he beckoned me."

"Not a man of premature advice, though."

"He told me he had observed my play. I had been relying on the alternations of the colours, which alternation chance persistently avoids, and arrives at equality by runs. He then gave me a better system."

"And, having expounded his system, he illustrated it. Tell the truth now; he sat down and lost the coat off his back. It followed his family acres."

"You are quite wrong again. He never plays. He has heart disease, and his physician has forbidden him all excitement."

"His nation?"

"Humph! French."

"Ah!" the nation that produced '*Le philosophe sans le savoir.*' And now it has added, '*Le philosophe sans le vouloir,*' and you have stumbled on him. What a life for an aged man! *Fortunatus ille senex qui ludicola vivit.* Tantalus handcuffed, and glowering over a gambling-table; a hell in a hell."

"Oh, Harrington!"

"Exclamations not allowed in sober argument, Zoe. Come, Ned, it is not heart disease, it is purse disease. Just do me a favour. Here

are five sovereigns; give those to the old beggar, and let him risk them."

"I could hardly take such a liberty with an old gentleman of his age and appearance—a man of honour too, and high sentiments. Why, I'd bet seven to four he is one of Napoleon's old soldiers."

The ladies sided unanimously with Severne. "What! offer a *vieux de l'Empire* five pounds? Oh fie!"

"Fiddle-de-dee!" said the indomitable Vizard. "Besides, Ned will do it with his usual grace. He will approach the son of Mars with that feigned humility which sits so well on youth, and ask him, as a personal favour, to invest five pounds for *him* at *rouge et noir*. The old soldier will stiffen into double dignity at first, then give him a low wink, and end by sitting down and gambling. He will be cautious at starting, as one who opens trenches for the siege of Mammon; but soon the veteran will get heated, and give battle; he will fancy himself at Jena, since the croupiers are Prussians. If he loses, you cut him dead, being a humdrum Englishman; and if he wins, he cuts you, and pockets the cash, being a Frenchman that talks sentiment."

This sally provoked a laugh, in which Severne

joined, and said, "Really, for a landed proprietor, you know a thing or two." He consented at last, with some reluctance, to take the money; and none of the persons present doubted that he would execute the commission with a grace and delicacy all his own. Nevertheless, to run forward a little with the narrative, I must tell you that he never did hand that five pound to the venerable sire; a little thing prevented him—the old man wasn't born yet.

"And now," said Vizard, "it is our last day in Homburg. You are all going to gratify your mania—lunacy is contagious; suppose I gratify mine."

"Do, dear," said Zoe; "and what is it?"

"I like your asking that; when it was publicly announced last night, and I fled discomfited to my balcony, and, in my confusion, lighted a cigar. My mania is—the Klosking."

"That is not a mania; it is good taste. She is admirable."

"Yes, in an opera: but I want to know how she looks and talks, in a room; and that is insane of me."

"Then so you *shall*, insane or not. I will call on her this morning, and take you in my hand."

"What an ample palm! and what juvenile audacity! Zoe, you take my breath away."

"No audacity at all. I am sure of my welcome. How often must I tell you that we have mesmerised each other, that lady and I; and are only waiting an opportunity to rush into each other's arms! It began with her singling me out at the opera. But I daresay that was owing, *at first*, only to my being in full dress."

"No, no; to your being, like Agamemnon, a head taller than all the other Greeks."

"Harrington! I am not a Greek. I am a thorough English girl at heart, though I *am* as black as a coal."

"No apology needed in our present frame—you are all the more like the ace of spades."

"Do you want me to take you to the Klosking, sir? Then you had better not make fun of me. I tell you she sang to *me*, and smiled on *me*, and curtsied to *me;* and, now you have put it into my head, I mean to call upon her; and I will take you with me. What I shall do, I shall send in my card. I shall be admitted, and you will wait outside. As soon as she sees me, she will run to me with both hands out, and say, in excellent *French*, '*How*, Mademoiselle!

you have deigned to remember me, and to honour me with a visit.' Then I shall say, in school-French, 'Yes, Madame; excuse the intrusion; but I was so charmed with your performance. We leave Homburg to-morrow; and as, unfortunately for myself, I cannot have the pleasure of seeing you again upon the stage——' then I shall stop, for her to interrupt me. Then she will interrupt me, and say charming things, as only foreigners can; and then I shall say, still in school-French, 'Madame, I am not alone. I have my brother with me. He adores music, and was as fascinated with your Siebel as myself. May I present him?' Then she will say, 'Oh yes, by all means:' and I shall introduce you. Then you can make love to her. That will be droll. Fanny, I'll tell you every word he says."

"Make love to her!" cried Vizard. "Is this your estimate of a brother's motives? My object in visiting this lady is, not to feed my mania, but to cure it. I have seen her on the stage, looking like the incarnation of a poet's dream. I am *extasié* with her. Now let me catch her *en déshabille*, with her porter on one side, and her lover on the other: and so to Barfordshire, relieved of a fatal illusion."

"If that is your view, I'll go by myself; for I know she is a noble woman, and as much a lady off the stage as on it. But suppose she should talk that dreadful guttural German, with its 'oches' and its 'aches,' then where shall we all be? We must ask Mr Severne to go with us."

"A good idea; no—a vile one. He is abominably handsome, and has the gift of the gab—in German, and other languages. He is sure to cut me out, the villain! Lock him up, somebody, till we come back."

"Now, Harrington, don't be absurd. He must, and shall, be of the party. I have my reasons. Mr Severne," said she, turning on him with a blush and a divine smile, "you will oblige me, I am sure."

Severne's face turned as blank as a doll's, and he said nothing, one way or other.

It was settled that they should all meet at the Kursaal at four, to dine and play. But Zoe and her party would go on ahead by the one o'clock train; and so she retired to put on her bonnet —a technical expression, which implies a good deal.

Fanny went with her, and, as events more exciting than the usual routine of their young lives

were ahead, their tongues went a rare pace. But the only thing worth presenting to the reader came at the end, after the said business of the toilet had been despatched.

Zoe said, "I must go now, or I shall keep them waiting."

"Only one, dear," said Fanny, drily.

"Why only one?"

"Mr Severne will not go."

"That he will: I made a point of it."

"You did, dear; but still he will not go."

There was something in this, and in Fanny's tone, that startled Zoe, and puzzled her sorely. She turned round upon her, with flashing eye, and said, "No mysteries, please, dear. Why won't he go with me wherever I ask him to go? or, rather, what makes you think he won't?"

Said Fanny, thoughtfully, "I could not tell you, all in a moment, why I feel so positive. One puts little things together, that are nothing apart: one observes faces; I do, at least. You don't seem, to me, to be so quick at that as most girls. But, Zoe, dear, you know very well one often knows a thing for certain, yet one doesn't know exactly what makes one know it."

Now Zoe's *amour propre* was wounded by

Fanny's suggestion that Severne would not go to Homburg, or, indeed, to the world's end with her; so she drew herself up in her grand way, and folded her arms, and said, a little haughtily, "Then tell me what is it you know about *him* and me, without knowing how on earth you know it."

The supercilious tone and grand manner nettled Fanny, and it wasn't "brooch day:" she stood up to her lofty cousin like a little game-cock. "I know this," said she, with heightened cheek, and flashing eyes, and a voice of steel; "you will never get Mr Edward Severne into one room with Zoe Vizard and Ina Klosking."

Zoe Vizard turned very pale, but her eyes flashed defiance on her friend.

"That I'll know," said she, in a deep voice, with a little gasp, but a world of pride and resolution.

CHAPTER VIII.

The ladies went down together, and found Vizard ready. Mr Severne was not in the room. Zoe inquired after him.

"Gone to get a sun-shade," said Vizard.

"There!" said Zoe to Fanny, in a triumphant whisper. "What is that for, but to go with us?"

Fanny made no reply.

They waited some time for Severne and his sun-shade.

At last Vizard looked at his watch, and said they had only five minutes to spare. "Come down and look after him. He *must* be somewhere about."

They went down, and looked for him all over the Platz. He was not to be seen. At last Vizard took out his watch and said, "It is some misunderstanding: we can't wait any longer."

So he and Zoe went to the train. Neither said much on the way to Homburg; for they were both brooding. Vizard's good sense and right feeling were beginning to sting him a little for calling on the Klosking at all, and a great deal for using the enthusiasm of an inexperienced girl to obtain an introduction to a public singer. He sat moody in his corner, taking himself to task. Zoe's thoughts ran in quite another channel; but she was no easier in her mind. It really seemed as if Severne had given her the slip. Probably he would explain his conduct; but then that Fanny should foretell he would avoid her company, rather than call on Mademoiselle Klosking, and that Fanny should be right, this made the thing serious, and galled Zoe to the quick: she was angry with Fanny for prophesying truly; she was rather angry with Severne for not coming, and more angry with him for making good Fanny's prediction.

Zoe Vizard was a good girl, and a generous girl; but she was not a humble girl: she had a great deal of pride, and her share of vanity, and here both were galled. Besides that, it seemed

to her most strange and disheartening, that Fanny, who did not love Severne, should be able to foretell his conduct better than she, who did love him; such foresight looked like greater insight. All this humiliated, and also puzzled, her strangely; and so she sat brooding as deeply as her brother.

As for Vizard, by the time they got to Homburg, he had made up his mind. As they got out of the train he said, "Look here; I am ashamed of myself. I have a right to play the fool, alone; but I have no business to drag my sister into it. We will go somewhere else. There are lots of things to see. I give up the Klosking."

Zoe stared at him a moment, and then answered, with cold decision, "No, dear; you must allow me to call on her, now I am here. She won't bite *me*."

"Well, but it is a strange thing to do."

"What does that matter? We are abroad."

"Come, Zoe, I am much obliged to you; but give it up."

"No, dear."

Harrington smiled at her pretty peremptori-

ness, and misunderstood it. "This is carrying sisterly love a long way," said he. "I must try and rise to your level. I won't go with you."

"Then I shall go alone."

"What if I forbid you, Miss?"

She tapped him on the cheek with her fingers. "Don't affect the tyrant, dear; you can't manage it. Fanny said something that has mortified me. I shall go; you can do as you like. But, stop; where does she live?"

"Suppose I decline to tell you? I am seized with a virtuous fit—a regular paroxysm."

"Then I shall go to the opera and inquire. But" (coaxingly) "you will tell me, dear."

"There," said Harrington, "you wicked, tempting girl, my sham virtue has oozed away, and my real mania triumphs. She lives at 'The Golden Star.' I was weak enough to send Harris in last night to learn."

Zoe smiled.

He hailed a conveyance; and they started at once for "The Golden Star."

"Zoe," said Harrington, gravely, "something tells me I am going to meet my fate."

"All the better," said Zoe; "I wish you to meet your fate. My love for my brother is not selfish. I am sure she is a good woman. Perhaps I may find out something."

"About what?"

"Oh, never mind."

CHAPTER IX.

All this time Ina Klosking was rehearsing at the theatre, quite unconscious of the impending visit. A royal personage had commanded 'Il Barbiere,' the part of Rosina to be restored to the original key. It was written for a contralto, but transposed by the influence of Grisi.

Having no performance that night, they began to rehearse rather later than usual, and did not leave off till a quarter to four o'clock. Ina, who suffered a good deal at rehearsals from the inaccuracy and apathy of the people, went home fagged, and with her throat parched.

She ordered a cutlet, with potato chips, and lay down on the sofa. While she was reposing, came Joseph Ashmead, to cheer her, with good photographs of her, taken the day before. She smiled gratefully at his zeal. He also reminded her that he had orders to take her to the Kur-

saal: he said the tables would be well filled from five o'clock till quite late, there being no other entertainment on foot that evening.

Ina thanked him, and said she would not miss going on any account; but she was rather fatigued and faint.

"Oh, I'll wait for you as long as you like," said Ashmead, kindly.

"No, my good comrade," said Ina. "I will ask you to go to the manager and get me a little money, and then to the Kursaal and secure me a place at the table in the largest room. There I will join you. If *he* is not there—and I am not so mad as to think he will be there—I shall risk a few pieces myself, to be nearer him in mind."

This amazed Ashmead; it was so unlike her. "You are joking," said he. "Why, if you lose five napoleons at play, it will be your death; you will grizzle so."

"Yes; but I shall not lose. I am too unlucky in love, to lose at cards. I mean to play this afternoon; and never again in all my life. Sir, I am resolved."

"Oh, if you are resolved, there is no more to be said. I won't run my head against a brick wall."

Ina, being half a foreigner, thought this rather brusque. She looked at him askant, and said, quietly, "Others, besides me, can be stubborn, and get their own way, while speaking the language of submission. Not I invented volition."

With this flea in his ear, the faithful Joseph went off, chuckling, and obtained an advance from the manager, and then proceeded to the principal gaming-table, and, after waiting some time, secured a chair, which he kept for his chief.

An hour went by; an hour and a half. He was obliged, for very shame, to bet. This he did, five francs at a time; and his risk was so small, and his luck so even, that by degrees he was drawn into conversation with his neighbour, a young swell, who was watching the run of the colours, and betting in silver, and pricking a card, preparatory to going in for a great *coup*. Meantime he favoured Mr Ashmead with his theory of chances; and Ashmead listened very politely to every word; because he was rather proud of the other's notice—he was so handsome, well dressed, and well spoken.

Meantime Ina Klosking snatched a few minutes' sleep, as most artists can in the afternoon, and was awakened by the servant bringing in

her frugal repast, a cutlet, and a pint of Bordeaux.

On her plate he brought her a large card, on which was printed "Miss Zoe Vizard:" this led to inquiries, and he told her a lady of superlative beauty had called and left that card; Ina asked for a description.

"Ah, madame," said Karl, "do not expect details from me. I was too dazzled, and struck by lightning, to make an inventory of her charms."

"At least you can tell me was she dark or fair."

"Madame, she was dark as night; but glorious as the sun. Her earthly abode is the 'Russie,' at Frankfort; blest hotel!"

"Did she tell you so?"

"Indirectly. She wrote on the card with the smallest pencil I have hitherto witnessed: the letters are faint, the pencil being inferior to the case, which was golden. Nevertheless, as one is naturally curious to learn whence a bright vision has emerged, I permitted myself to decipher."

"Your curiosity was natural," said Ina, drily. "I will detain you with no more questions."

She put the card carefully away; and ate her modest repast. Then she made her afternoon

toilet, and walked slowly and pensively to the Kursaal.

Nothing there was new to her, except to be going to the table without the man on whom it was her misfortune to have wasted her heart of gold.

I think, therefore, it would be better for me to enter the place in company with our novices; and, indeed, we must; or we shall derange the true order of time and sequence of incidents: for, please observe, all the English ladies of our story met at the Kursaal, while Ina was reposing on her sofa.

The first comers were Zoe and Harrington. They entered the noble hall, inscribed their names, and, by that simple ceremony, were members of a club, compared with which the greatest clubs in London are petty things: a club with spacious dining-rooms, ball-rooms, concert-rooms, gambling-rooms, theatre, and delicious gardens. The building that combined so many rich treats was colossal in size, and glorious with rich colours and gold laid on with oriental profusion, and sometimes with oriental taste.

Harrington took his sister through the drawing-rooms first; and she admired the unusual

loftiness of the rooms, the blaze of white and gold, and of celadon green and gold, and the great Russian lustres, and the mighty mirrors. But, when they got to the dining-room she was enchanted. That lofty and magnificent *salon*, with its daring mixture of red and black, and green and blue, all melted into harmony by the rivers of gold that ran boldly among them, went to her very heart. A Greek is half an oriental; and Zoe had what may be called the courage of colour. "Glorious!" she cried, and clasped her hands. "And see! what a background to the emerald grass outside, and the ruby flowers! They seem to come into the room through those monster windows."

"Splendid!" said Harrington, to whom all this was literally Greek. "I'm so excited, I'll order dinner."

"Dinner!" said Zoe, disdainfully; and sat down and eyed the Mooresque walls around her, and the beauties of nature outside, and brought them together in one picture.

Harrington was a long time in conclave with M. Chevet. Then Zoe became impatient.

"Oh, do leave off ordering dinner," said she, "and take me out to that other paradise."

The Chevet shrugged his shoulders with pity. Vizard shrugged his too, to soothe him: and, after a few more hurried words, took the lover of colour into the garden. It was delicious, with green slopes, and rich foliage, and flowers, and enlivened by bright silk dresses, sparkling fitfully among the green leaves, or flaming out boldly in the sun: and, as luck would have it, before Zoe had taken ten steps upon the green sward, the band of fifty musicians struck up, and played, as fifty men rarely play together out of Germany.

Zoe was enchanted. She walked on air, and beamed as bright as any flower in the place.

After her first ejaculation at the sudden music, she did not speak for a good while; her content was so great. At last she said, "And do they leave this paradise, to gamble in a room?"

"Leave it? They shun it. The gamblers despise the flowers."

"How perverse people are! Excitement! Who wants any more than this?"

"Zoe," said Vizard, "innocent excitement can never compete with vicious."

"What! is it really wicked to play?"

"I don't know about wicked: you girls always

run to the biggest word. But, if avarice is a vice, gambling cannot be virtuous; for the root of gambling is mere avarice, weak avarice. Come, my young friend, *as we're quite alone*, I'll drop Thersites, and talk sense to you, for once. Child, there are two roads to wealth: one is by the way of industry, skill, vigilance, and self-denial; and these are virtues, though sometimes they go with tricks of trade, hardness of heart, and taking advantage of misfortune, to buy cheap, and sell dear. The other road to wealth is by bold speculation, with risk of proportionate loss; in short, by gambling with cards, or without them. Now look into the mind of the gambler: he wants to make money, contrary to nature, and unjustly. He wants to be rewarded without merit, to make a fortune in a moment, and without industry, vigilance, true skill, or self-denial; 'a penny saved is a penny gained,' does not enter his creed. Strip the thing of its disguise, it is avarice, sordid avarice: and I call it weak avarice; because the gambler relies on chance alone, yet accepts uneven chances, and hopes that Fortune will be as much in love with him as he is with himself. What silly egotism! You admire the Kursaal, and you are right; then do just ask yourself why is there

nothing to pay for so many expensive enjoyments; and very little to pay for concerts and balls; low prices at the opera, which never pays its own expenses; even Chevet's dinners are reasonable, if you avoid his sham Johannisberg. All these cheap delights—the gold, the colours, the garden, the music, the lights—are paid for by the losses of feeble-minded Avarice. But, there—I said all this to Ned Severne, and I might as well have preached sense to the wind."

"Harrington, I will not play. I am much happier walking, with my good brother——"

"Faute de mieux."

Zoe blushed, but would not hear—"and it is so good of you to make a friend of me, and talk sense. Oh!—see!—a lady with two blues!—Come and look at her."

Before they had taken five steps, Zoe stopped short, and said, "It is Fanny Dover, I declare. She has not seen us yet. She is short-sighted. Come here." And the impetuous maid dragged him off behind a tuft of foliage.

When she had got him there, she said hotly that it was too bad.

"Oh, is it?" said he, very calmly. "What?"

"Why, don't you see what she has done?

You, so sensible, to be so slow about women's ways; and you are always pretending to know them: why, she has gone and bought that costume with the money you gave her to play with."

"Sensible girl!"

"Dishonest girl! *I* call her."

"There you go to your big words. No, no. A little money was given her for a bad purpose. She has used it for a frivolous one. That is 'a step in the right direction'—jargon of the day."

"But to receive money for one purpose, and apply it to another, is,—what do you call it—*chose?—détournement des fonds*—what is the English word? I've been abroad till I've forgotten English; oh, I know—embezzlement."

"Well, that is a big word for a small transaction; you have not dug in the mine of the vernacular for nothing."

"Harrington, if you don't mind, I do: so please come. I'll talk to her."

"Stop a moment," said Vizard, very gravely. "You will not say one word to her."

"And why not, pray?"

"Because it would be unworthy of us, and cruel

to her: barbarously cruel. What! call her to account before that old woman and me?"

"Why not? She is flaunting her blues before you two, and plenty more."

"Feminine logic, Zoe. The point is this — she is poor. You must know that. This comes of poverty and love of dress; not of dishonesty and love of dress: and just ask yourself, is there a creature that ought to be pitied more, and handled more delicately, than a *poor lady?* Why, you would make her writhe with shame and distress. Well, I do think there is not a single wild animal so cruel to another wild animal, as a woman is to a woman. You are cruel to one another by instinct. But I appeal to your reason—if you have any."

Zoe's eyes filled. "You are right," said she, humbly. "Thank you, for thinking for me. I will not say a word to her before *you*."

"That is a good girl. But, come now, why say a word at all?"

"Oh, it is no use your demanding impossibilities, dear; I could no more help speaking to her than I could fly; and don't go fancying she will care a pin what I say, if I don't say it before a *gentleman*."

Having given him this piece of information, she left her ambush, and proceeded to meet the all unconscious blue girl: but, even as they went, Vizard returned to his normal condition, and doled out, rather indolently, that they were out on pleasure, and might possibly miss the object of the excursion, if they were to encourage a habit of getting into rages about nothing.

Zoe was better than her word. She met Fanny, with open admiration: to be sure, she knew that apathy, or even tranquillity, on first meeting the Blues, would be instantly set down to envy.

"And where did you get it, dear?"

"At quite a small shop."

"French?"

"Oh no; I think she was an Austrian: this is not a French mixture: loud, discordant colours, that is the French taste."

"Here is heresy," said Vizard: "why, I thought the French beat the world, in dress."

"Yes, dear," said Zoe, "in form and pattern: but Fanny is right; they make mistakes in colour. They are terribly afraid of scarlet; but they are afraid of nothing else: and many of their mixtures are as discordant to the eye, as Wagner's music to the ear. Now, after all, scar-

let is the king of colours; and there is no harm in King Scarlet, if you treat him with respect, and put a modest subject next to him."

"Gipsy locks, for instance," suggested Fanny, slily.

Miss Maitland owned herself puzzled. "In my day," said she, "no one ever thought of putting blue upon blue; but really, somehow, it looks well."

"May I tell you why, aunt?—because the dressmaker had a real eye, and has chosen the right tints of blue. It is all nonsense about one *colour* not going with another. Nature defies that; and how? by choosing the very *tints* of each colour that will go together. The sweetest room I ever saw was painted by a great artist; and, do you know, he had coloured the ceiling blue and the walls green: and I assure you the effect was heavenly: but then he had chosen the exact tints of green and blue that would go together. The draperies were between crimson and maroon. But there's another thing in Fanny's dress; it is velvet. Now blue velvet is blue to the mind; but it is not blue to the eye. You try and paint blue velvet; you will be surprised how much white you must lay on.

The high lights of all velvets are white. This white helps to blend the two tints of blue."

"This is very instructive," said Vizard: "I was not aware I had a sister, youthful, but profound. Let us go in and dine."

Fanny demurred. She said she believed Miss Maitland wished to take one turn round the grounds first.

Miss Maitland stared, but assented in a mechanical way; and they commenced their promenade.

Zoe hung back, and beckoned her brother. "Miss Maitland!" said she, with such an air. "*She* wants to show her blues to all the world and his wife."

"Very natural," said Vizard. "So would you, if you were in a scarlet gown, with a crimson cloak."

Zoe laughed heartily at this, and forgave Fanny her new dress: but she had a worse bone than that to pick with her.

It was a short but agreeable promenade to Zoe; for, now they were alone, her brother, instead of sneering, complimented her.

"Never you mind my impertinence," said he; "the truth is, I am proud of you. You are an observer."

"Me? Oh—in colour."

"Never mind: an observer is an observer; and genuine observation is not so common. Men see and hear with their prejudices, and not their senses. Now we are going to those gaming-tables. At first, of course, you will play; but, as soon as ever you are cleaned out, observe! Let nothing escape that woman's eye of yours: and so we'll get something for our money."

"Harrington," said the girl, proudly, "I will be all eye and ear."

Soon after this they went in to dinner. Zoe cast her eyes round for Severne, and was manifestly disappointed at his not meeting them even there.

As for Fanny she had attracted wonderful attention in the garden, and was elated; her conscience did not prick her in the least, for such a trifle as *détournement des fonds:* and public admiration did not improve her. She was sprightly and talkative as usual; but now she was also a trifle brazen, and pert all round.

And so the dinner passed, and they proceeded to the gaming-tables.

Miss Maitland and Zoe led. Fanny and Harrington followed: for Miss Dover, elated by the

blues—though, by the by, one hears of them as depressing—and encouraged by admiration and Chevet's violet-perfumed St Peray, took Harrington's arm, really as if it belonged to her.

They went into the library first, and, after a careless inspection, came to the great attraction of the place. They entered one of the gambling-rooms.

The first impression was disappointing. There were two very long tables, rounded off at the ends: one for *trente et quarante* and one for *roulette*. At each table were seated a number of persons, and others standing behind them. Amongst the persons seated were the dealer, or, in *roulette*, the spinner. These officials sat in the centre, flanked on each side by croupiers with rakes: but at each end of the table there was also a croupier with his rake.

The rest were players or lookers-on; most of whom, by well-known gradations of curiosity and weakness, to describe which minutely would be to write a little comedy that others have already written, were drawn into playing at last. So fidgets the moth about the candle before he makes up, what, no doubt, the poor little soul calls his mind.

Our little party stopped first at *trente et quarante*, and Zoe commenced her observations. Instead of the wild excitement she had heard of, there was a subdued air, a forced quiet, especially among the seated players. A stern etiquette presided, and the gamblers shrouded themselves in well-bred stoicism—losing without open distress or ire, winning without open exultation. The old hands, especially, began play with a padlock on the tongue and a mask upon the face. There are masks, however, that do not hide the eye; and Miss Vizard caught some flashes that escaped the masks even then at the commencement of the play. Still, external stoicism prevailed, on the whole, and had a fixed example in the *tailleur* and the croupiers: playing many hours every day in the year but Good Friday, and always with other people's money, these men had parted with passion, and almost with sensation; they had become skilful automata, chanting a stave, and raking up or scattering haycocks of gold which to them were counters.

It was with the monotonous voice of an automaton they intoned—

"Faites le jeu, Messieu, Messieu."

Then, after a pause of ten seconds—

"Le jeu est fait, Messieu."

Then, after two seconds—

"Rien ne va plus."

Then mumble—mumble—mumble.

Then, "La! Rouge perd et couleur," or whatever might be the result.

Then the croupiers first raked in the players' losses with vast expedition; next, the croupiers in charge of the funds chucked the precise amount of the winnings on to each stake with unerring dexterity and the indifference of machines, and the chant recommenced, "Faites le jeu, Messieu."

Pause, ten seconds.

"Le jeu est fait, Messieu."

Pause, two seconds.

"Rien ne va plus."

The *tailleur* dealt, and the croupier intoned, "La! Rouge gagne et couleur perd;" the mechanical raking and dexterous chucking followed.

This, with a low buzzing, and the deadened jingle of gold upon green cloth, and the light grating of the croupiers' rakes, was the first impression upon Zoe's senses; but the mere game did not monopolise her attention many seconds. There were other things better worth noting:

the great varieties of human type, that a single passion had brought together in a small German town. Her ear was regaled with such a polyglot murmur as she had read of in Genesis, but had never witnessed before.

Here were the sharp Tuscan and the mellow Roman; the sibilation of England, the brogue of Ireland, the Shibboleth of the Minories, the twang of certain American States, the guttural expectoration of Germany, the nasal emphasis of France, and even the modulated Hindostanee, and the sonorous Spanish, all mingling.

The types of face were as various as the tongues.

Here was the green-eyed Tartar, the black-eyed Italian, and the grey-eyed Saxon; faces all cheek-bones, and faces no cheek-bones; the red Arabian, the fair Dane, and the dark Hindoo.

Her woman's eye seized another phenomenon, —the hands. Not nations only, but varieties of the animal kingdom were represented. Here were the white hands of fair women, and the red paws of obese shopkeepers, and the yellow, bird-like claws of old withered gamesters, all stretched out, side by side, in strange contrast, to place the stakes or scratch in the winnings;

and often the winners put their palms, and paws, on their heap of gold, just as a dog does on a bone when other dogs are nigh.

But what Zoe's eye rested on longest was the costume and deportment of the ladies. A few were in good taste; others aimed at a greater variety of beautiful colours, than the fair have, up to this date, succeeded in combining, without inflicting more pain on the beholders, than a beneficent Creator—so far as we can judge by His own system of colour—intended the cultivated eye to suffer. Example — as the old writers used to say—one lady fired the air in primrose satin, with red velvet trimming. This mild mixture reappeared on her head in a primrose hat with a red feather. A gold chain, so big that it would have done for a felon instead of a fool, encircled her neck, and was weighted with innumerable lockets, which in size and inventive taste resembled a poached egg, and betrayed the insular goldsmith. A train three yards long completed this gorgeous figure. She had commenced life a shrimp-girl, and pushed a dredge before her, instead of pulling a silken besom after her. Another stately queen (with an "a") heated the atmosphere with a burnous

of that colour the French call *flamme d'enfer*, and cooled it with a green bonnet. A third appeared to have been struck with the beauty of a painter's palette, and the skill with which its colours mix before the brush spoils them. Green body, violet skirts, rose-coloured trimmings, purple sleeves, light-green boots, lavender gloves. A shawl all gauze and gold, flounced like a petticoat; a bonnet so small, and red feather so enormous and all-predominant, that a peacock seemed to be sitting on a hedge-sparrow's nest.

Zoe suspected these polychromatic ladies at a glance, and observed their manners in a mistrustful spirit, carefully. She was little surprised, though a good deal shocked, to find that some of them seemed familiar, and almost jocular, with the croupiers; and that, although they did not talk loud, being kept in order by the general etiquette, they rustled, and fidgeted, and played in a devil-may-care sort of manner: this was in great measure accounted for by the circumstance that they were losing other people's money: at all events, they often turned their heads over their shoulders, and applied for fresh funds to their male companions.

Zoe blushed at all this, and said to Vizard, "I should like to see the other rooms." She whispered to Miss Maitland, "Surely they are not very select in this one."

"Lead on," said Vizard; "that is the way."

Fanny had not parted with his arm all this time. As they followed the others, he said, "But she will find it is all the same thing."

Fanny laughed in his face. "Don't you *see*? C'est la chasse au Severne qui commence."

"En voila un Sévère," replied he.

She was mute. She had not learned that sort of French in her finishing school. I forgive it.

The next room was the same thing over again.

Zoe stood a moment and drank everything in, then turned to Vizard, blushed, and said, "May we play a little now?"

"Why, of course."

"Fanny!"

"No; you begin, dear. We will stand by and wish you success."

"You are a coward," said Zoe, loftily; and went to the table with more changes of colour than veteran lancers betray in charging infantry. It was the *roulette* table she chose. That seems a law of her sex. The true solution is not so

profound as some that have been offered. It is this : *trente et quarante* is not only unintelligible, but uninteresting. At *roulette* there is a pictorial object and dramatic incident; the board, the turning of the *moulinet*, and the swift revolutions of an ivory ball, its lowered speed, its irregular bounds, and its final settlement in one of the many holes, numbered and coloured. Here the female understanding sees something it can grasp, and, above all, the female eye catches something pictorial and amusing outside the loss or gain ; and so she goes, by her nature, to *roulette*, which is a greater swindle than the other.

Zoe staked five pounds on No. 21, for an excellent reason; she was in her twenty-first year. The ball was so illogical as to go into No. 3, and she lost. She stood by her number, and lost again. She lost thirteen times in succession.

The fourteenth time the ball rolled into 21, and the croupier handed her thirty-five times her stake, and a lot more for colour.

Her eye flashed, and her cheek flushed, and I suppose she was tempted to bet more heavily, for she said, "No ; that will never happen to me

again, I know:" and she rose, the richer by several napoleons, and said, "Now let us go to another."

"Humph!" said Vizard. "What an extraordinary girl! She will give the devil more trouble than most of you. Here's precocious prudence."

Fanny laughed in his face. "C'est la chasse qui recommence," said she.

I ought to explain that when she was in England, she did not interlard her discourse with French scraps. She was not so ill-bred. But abroad she had got into a way of it, through being often compelled to speak French.

Vizard appreciated the sagacity of the remark, but he did not like the lady any the better for it. He meditated in silence. He remembered that, when they were in the garden, Zoe had hung behind, and interpreted Fanny ill-naturedly; and here was Fanny at the same game, literally backbiting, or back-nibbling at all events. Said he to himself, "And these two are friends! female friends." And he nursed his misogyny in silence.

They came into a very noble room, the largest of all, with enormous mirrors down to the

ground, and a ceiling blazing with gold, and the air glittering with lustres. Two very large tables, and a distinguished company at each, especially at the *trente et quarante.*

Before our little party had taken six steps into the room, Zoe stood like a pointer; and Fanny backed. Should these terms seem disrespectful, let Fanny bear the blame. It is her application of the word "chasse" that drew down the simile.

Yes, there sat Ned Severne, talking familiarly to Joseph Ashmead, and preparing to "put the pot on," as he called it.

Now Zoe was so far gone, that the very sight of Severne was a balsam to her. She had a little bone to pick with him; and, when he was out of sight, the bone seemed pretty large. But when she saw his adorable face, unconscious, as it seemed, of wrong, the bone faded, and the face shone.

Her own face cleared at the sight of him: she turned back to Fanny and Vizard, arch and smiling, and put her finger to her mouth, as much as to say, "Let us have some fun. We have caught our truant: let us watch him, unseen, a little, before we burst on him."

Vizard enjoyed this, and encouraged her with a nod.

The consequence was that Zoe dropped Miss Maitland's arm, who took that opportunity to turn up her nose,—and began to creep up like a young cat after a bird; taking a step, and then pausing; then another step, and a long pause; and still with her eye fixed on Severne. He did not see her, nor her companions, partly because they were not in front of him, but approaching at a sharp angle, and also because he was just then beginning to bet heavily on his system. By this means two progressive events went on contemporaneously: the arch but cat-like advance of Zoe, with pauses, and the betting of Severne, in which he gave himself the benefit of his system.

Noir having been the last to win, he went against the alternation, and put £50 on *noir*. Red won. Then, true to his system, he doubled on the winning colour. £100 on red. Black won. He doubled on black, and red won; and there was £400 of his £500 gone in five minutes.

On this proof that the likeliest thing to happen—viz., alternation of the colour—does *sometimes* happen, Severne lost heart.

He turned to Ashmead, with all the superstition of a gambler, "For God's sake, bet for me!" said he. He clutched his own hair convulsively, in a struggle with his mania, and prevailed so far as to thrust £50 into his own pocket, to live on, and gave Ashmead five tens.

"Well, but," said Ashmead, "you must tell me what to do."

"No, no. Bet your own way, for *me*."

He had hardly uttered these words, when he seemed to glare across the table at the great mirror, and, suddenly putting his handkerchief to his mouth, he made a bolt sideways, plunged amidst the by-standers, and emerged only to dash into a room at the side.

As he disappeared, a lady came slowly and pensively forward from the outer door; lifted her eyes, as she neared the table, saw a vacant chair, and glided into it, revealing, to Zoe Vizard and her party, a noble face, not so splendid and animated as on the stage, for its expression was slumbering; still it was the face of Ina Klosking.

No transformation trick was ever done more neatly and smoothly than this, in which, nevertheless, the performers acted without concert.

Severne fled out, and the Klosking came slowly in; yet no one had time to take the seat, she glided into it so soon after Severne had vacated it.

Zoe Vizard and her friends stared after the flying Severne; then stared at the new-comer; and then turned round and stared at each other, in mutual amazement and inquiry.

What was the meaning of this double incident, that resembled a conjuror's trick?

Having looked at her companions, and seen only her own surprise reflected, Zoe Vizard fixed her eyes, like burning-glasses, upon Ina Klosking.

Then that lady thickened the mystery. She seemed very familiar with the man Severne had been so familiar with.

That man contributed his share to the multiplying mystery. He had a muddy complexion, hair the colour of dirt, a long nose, a hatchet face, mean little eyes, and was evidently not a gentleman: he wore a brown velveteen shooting-coat, with a magenta tie that gave Zoe a pain in the eye. She had already felt sorry to see her Severne was acquainted with such a man; he seemed to her the *ne plus ultra* of vulgarity; and now, behold, the artist, the woman she had

so admired, was equally familiar with the same objectionable person.

To appreciate the hopeless puzzle of Zoe Vizard, the reader must be on his guard against his own knowledge. *He* knows that Severne and Ashmead were two Bohemians, who had struck up acquaintance, all in a minute, that very evening. But Zoe had not this knowledge; and she could not possibly divine it. The whole thing was presented to her senses thus—a vulgar man, with a brown velveteen shooting-coat, and a red-hot tie, was a mutual friend of the gentlemanly Severne and the dignified Klosking. Severne left the mutual friend; Mademoiselle Klosking joined the mutual friend; and there she sat, where Severne had sat a moment ago, by the side of their mutual friend.

All manner of thoughts and surmises thronged upon Zoe Vizard; but each way of accounting for the mystery contradicted some plain fact or other: so she was driven at last to a woman's remedy. She would wait, and watch. Severne would probably come back, and somehow furnish the key; meantime, her eye was not likely to leave the Klosking, nor her ear to miss a syllable the Klosking might utter.

She whispered to Vizard, in a very peculiar tone, "I will play at this table," and stepped up to it, with the word.

The duration of such beauty as Zoe's is proverbially limited; but the limit to its power, while it does last, has not yet been discovered. It is a fact that, as soon as she came close to the table, two male gamblers looked up, saw her, wondered at her, and actually jumped up and offered their seats: she made a courteous inclination of the head, and installed Miss Maitland in one seat, without reserve. She put a little gold on the table, and asked Miss Maitland, in a whisper, to play for her. She herself had neither eye nor ear, except for Ina Klosking. That lady was having a discussion, *sotto voce*, with Ashmead; and if she had been one of your mumblers, whose name is legion, even Zoe's swift ear could have caught little or nothing. But when a voice has volume, and the great habit of articulation has been brought to perfection, the words travel surprisingly.

Zoe heard the lady say to Ashmead, scarcely above her breath, "Well, but if he requested you to bet for him, how can he blame you?"

Zoe could not catch Ashmead's reply, but it

was accompanied by a shake of the head: so she understood him to object.

Then, after a little more discussion, Ina Klosking said, "What money have you of mine?"

Ashmead produced some notes.

"Very well," said the Klosking. "Now I shall take my twenty-five pounds, and twenty-five pounds of his, and play. When he returns, we shall, at all events, have twenty-five pounds safe for him. I take the responsibility."

"Oh," thought Zoe, "then he *is* coming back. Ah, I shall see what all this means." She felt sick at heart.

Zoe Vizard was on the other side, but not opposite Mademoiselle Klosking; she was considerably to the right hand, and as the new-comer was much occupied, just at first, with Ashmead, who sat on her left, Zoe had time to dissect her, which she did without mercy. Well, her costume was beautifully made, and fitted on a symmetrical figure; but as to colour, it was neutral—a warm French grey—and neither courted admiration nor risked censure; it was unpretending. Her lace collar was valuable, but not striking. Her hair was beautiful, both in gloss and colour,

and beautifully, but neatly arranged. Her gloves and wristbands were perfect.

As every woman aims at appearance, openly or secretly, and every other woman knows she does, Zoe did not look at this meek dress with male simplicity, unsuspicious of design, but asked herself what was the leading motive; and the question was no sooner asked than answered. "She has dressed for her golden hair and her white throat. Her hair, her deep grey eyes, and her skin, are just like a flower: she has dressed herself as the modest stalk. She is an artist."

At the same table were a Russian Princess, an English Countess, and a Bavarian Duchess, all well dressed, upon the whole; but their dresses showed off their dresses; the Klosking's showed off herself. And there was a native dignity, and, above all, a wonderful seemliness about the Klosking that inspired respect. Dress and deportment were all of a piece — decent and deep.

While Zoe was picking her to pieces, Ina, having settled matters with Ashmead, looked up, and, of course, took in every other woman, who was in sight, at a single sweep. She recognised Zoe directly, with a flush of pleasure; a sweet,

bright, expression broke over her face, and she bowed to her with a respectful cordiality that was captivating. Zoe yielded to the charm of manner, and bowed and smiled in return, though, till that moment, she had been knitting her black brows at her in wonder and vague suspicion.

Ina trifled with the game, at first. Ashmead was still talking to her of the young swell and his system. He explained it to her, and how it had failed "Not but what," said he, "there is a great deal in it most evenings. But to-day there are no runs; it is all turn and turn about. If it would rain, now, you would see a change."

"Well," said Ina, "I will bet a few pounds on red, then on black, till these runs begin."

During the above conversation, of which Zoe caught little, because Ashmead was the chief speaker, she cast her eyes all round the table, and saw a curious assemblage of figures.

There was a solemn Turk melting his piastres with admirable gravity; there was the Russian Princess; and there was a lady, dressed in loud, incongruous colours, such as once drew from a horrified *modiste* the cry, "Ah, Dieu! quel immoralité!!" and that's a fact. There was a Popish priest, looking sheepish as he staked his

silver; and an Anglican rector, betting fivers, and as *nonchalant*, in the blest absence of his flock and the Baptist minister, as if he was playing at whist with the old Bishop of Norwich, who played a nightly rubber in my father's day—and a very bad one. There was a French Count, nearly six feet high, to whom the word "old" would have been unjust: he was antique, and had turned into bones and leather; but the hair on that dilapidated trunk was its own; and Zoe preferred him much to the lusty old English beau beside him, with ivory teeth, and ebon locks, that cost a pretty penny.

There was a fat, livid, Neapolitan betting heavily; there was a creole lady, with a fine oval face rather sallow, and eyes and hair as black as Zoe's own. Indeed the creole excelled her, by the addition of a little black fringe upon her upper lip, that, prejudice apart, became her very well. Her front hair was confined by two gold threads, a little way apart, on which were fixed a singular ornament, the vivid eyes of a peacock's tail set close together all round. It was glorious, regal. The hussy should have been the Queen of Sheba, receiving Solomon, and showing her peacock's eyes against his crown jewels. Like

the lilies of the field, these products of nature are bad to beat, as we say on Yorkshire turf.

Indeed that frontlet was so beautiful and well placed, it drew forth glances of marked disdain from every lady within sight of it, Zoe excepted. She was placable. This was a lesson in colour; and she managed to forgive the teacher, in consideration of the lesson.

Amidst the gaudier birds there was a dove—a young lady, well dressed, with Quaker-like simplicity, in grey silk dress, with no trimmings, a white silk bonnet and veil. Her face was full of virtues. Meeting her elsewhere, you would say, "That is a good wife, a good daughter, and the making of a good mother." Her expression at the table was thoughtful and a little anxious; but every now and then she turned her head to look for her husband, and gave him so sweet a smile of conjugal sympathy and affection, as made Zoe almost pray they might win. The husband was an officer, a veteran, with grizzled hair and moustache, a colonel who had commanded a brigade in action, but could only love and spoil his wife. He ought to have been her father, her friend, her commander, and marched her out of that "Curse-all" to the top of Cader Idris,

if need was. Instead of that, he stood behind her chair like a lackey all day: for this dove was as desperate a gambler as any in Europe; it was not that she bet very heavily, but that she bet every day and all day. She began in the afternoon, and played till midnight if there was a table going. She knew no day of religion —no day of rest. She won and she lost: her own fortune and her husband's stood the money drain; but how about the golden hours? She was losing her youth and wasting her soul. Yet the Administration gave her a warning; they did not allow the irretrievable hours to be stolen from her with a noiseless hand. At All Souls' College, Oxford, in the first quadrangle, grave, thoughtful men raised to the top storey, two hundred years ago, a grand sundial, the largest, perhaps, and noblest in the kingdom. They set it on the face of the Quad, and wrote over the long pointers, in large letters of gold, these words, "Pereunt et imputantur," which refer to the hours indicated below, and mean literally, "They perish, and go down to our account;" but really imply a little more—viz., that "they are wasted and go to our debit." These are true words and big words, bigger than

any Royal Commissioner has uttered up to date, and reach the mind through the senses, and have warned the scholars of many a generation not to throw away the seed-time of their youth, which never can come twice to any man. Well, the Administration of the Kursaal conveyed to that lost English dove and others a note of warning, which struck the senses, as does the immortal warning emblazoned on the fair brow of that beautiful college; only, in the Kursaal the warning struck the ear, not the eye. They provided French clocks with a singularly clear metallic striking tick; their blows upon the life of Time rang sharp above the chant, the mumble, and the jingle. These clocks seemed to cry aloud, and say of the hours, whose waste they recorded, "Pere-unt-et-impu-tantur, pere-unt-et-impu-tantur."

Reckless of this protest, the waves of play rolled on, and, ere long, sucked all our characters, but Vizard, into the vortex. Zoe hazarded a sovereign on red, and won; then two on black, and won; then four on red, and won. She was launched, and Fanny too. They got excited, and bet higher; the croupiers pelted them with golden coins, and they began to pant and flush,

and their eyes to gleam. The old gamblers' eyes seem to have lost this power—they have grown fishy; but the eyes of these female novices were a sight. Fanny's, being light grey, gleamed like a panther's whose prey is within leap. Zoe's dark orbs could not resemble any wild beast's; but they glowed with unholy fire: and, indeed, all down the table was now seen that which no painter can convey—for his beautiful but contracted art confines him to a moment of time—and writers have strangely neglected to notice, —viz., the *progress of the countenance* under play. Many of the masks melted, as if they had been of wax, and the natural expressions forced their way; some got flushed with triumph, others wild and haggard with their losses. One ghastly glaring loser sat quite quiet, when his all was gone; but clenched his hands so that the nails ran into the flesh, and blood trickled: discovering which, a friend dragged him off like something dead. Nobody minded.

The fat old beau got worried by his teeth, and pulled them out in a pet, and pocketed them.

Miss Maitland, who had begun with her grey hair in neat little curls, deranged one so with convulsive hand, that it came all down her cheek

and looked most rakish and unbecoming. Even Zoe and Fanny had turned from lambs to leopardesses. Patches of red on each cheek and eyes like red-hot coals.

The colours had begun to run, and at first the players lost largely to the bank, with one exception.

Ina Klosking discerned the change, and backed the winning colour, then doubled on it twice. She did this so luckily three or four times that, though her single stake was, at first, only £40, gold seemed to grow around her; and even notes to rise and make a cushion. She, too, was excited, though not openly; her gloves were off, and her own lovely hand, the whitest in the room, placed the stakes. You might see a red spot on her cheek-bone, and a strange glint in her deep eye; but she could not do anything that was not seemly.

She played calmly, boldly, on the system that had cleared out Ned Severne, and she won heavily, because she was in luck. It was her hour and her vein.

By this time Zoe and Fanny were cleaned out; and looked in amazement at the Klosking, and wondered how she did it.

Miss Maitland, at her last sovereign, began to lean on the victorious Klosking, and bet as she did: her pile increased. The dove caught sight of her game, and backed her luck. The creole backed her heavily.

Presently there was an extraordinary run on black. Numbers were caught. The Klosking won three times, and lost three times: but the bets she won were double bets, and those she lost were single.

Then came a *refait*, and the bank swept off half her stake; but even here she was lucky. She had only £40 on.

By-and-by came the event of the night. Black had, for some time, appeared to rule the roost, and thrust red off the table; and the Klosking lost £200.

The Klosking put £200 on red; it won. She doubled: red won. She doubled. There was a dead silence. The creole lady put the maximum on red, £300. Red won. Ina Klosking looked a little pale: but, driven by some unaccountable impulse, she doubled. So did the creole. Red won. The automata chucked £1600 to the Klosking, and £600 to the other lady. Ina betted £40 on black. Red won again. She put

£200 on black: black won. She doubled: black won again. She doubled: black won. Doubled again: black won.

The creole and others stood with her in that last run, and the money was chucked. But the settlement was followed by a short whisper, and a croupier, in a voice as mechanical as ever, chanted that the sum set apart for that table was exhausted for that day.

The Klosking and her backers had broken the bank.

CHAPTER X.

THERE was a buzzing and a thronging round the victorious player.

Ina rose, and, with a delicate movement of her milk-white hand, turned the mountain of gold and column of notes towards Ashmead. "Make haste, please," she whispered; then put on her gloves deliberately, while Ashmead shoved the gold and the notes anyhow into the inner pockets of his shooting-jacket, and buttoned it well up.

"*Allons*," said she, calmly, and took his arm: but, as she moved away, she saw Zoe Vizard passing on the other side of the table. Their eyes met: she dropped Ashmead's arm, and made her a sweeping curtsy full of polite consideration, and a sort of courteous respect for the person saluted, coupled with a certain dignity; and then she looked wistfully at her

a moment. I believe she would have spoken to her if she had been alone; but Miss Maitland and Fanny Dover had, both of them, a trick of putting on *noli me tangere* faces amongst strangers. It did not mean much; it is an unfortunate English habit: but it repels foreigners; they neither do it nor understand it.

Those two faces, not downright forbidding, but uninviting, turned the scale; and the Klosking, who was not a forward woman, did not yield to her inclination and speak to Zoe. She took Ashmead's arm again, and moved away.

Then Zoe turned back and beckoned Vizard. He joined her. "There she is," said Zoe: "shall I speak to her?"

Would you believe it? He thought a moment, and then said, gloomily, "Well?—no. Half cured now. Seen the lover in time." So that opportunity was frittered away.

Before the English party left the Kursaal, Zoe asked, timidly, if they ought not to make some inquiry about Mr Severne. He had been taken ill again.

"Ay, taken ill, and gone to be cured at another table," said Vizard, ironically. "I'll make the tour, and collar him."

He went off in a hurry: Miss Maitland faced a glass, and proceeded to arrange her curl.

Fanny, though she had offered no opposition to Vizard's going, now seized Zoe's arm with unusual energy, and almost dragged her aside. "The idea of sending Harrington on that fool's errand!" said she, peevishly. "Why, Zoe! where are your eyes?"

Zoe showed her by opening them wide. "What *do* you mean?"

"What—do—I—mean? No matter. Mr Severne is not in this building, and you know it."

"How can I know? All is so mysterious," faltered Zoe. "How do *you* know?"

"Because — there — least said is soonest mended."

"Fanny, you are older than me, and ever so much cleverer, Tell me, or you are not my friend."

"Wait till you get home, then. Here he is."

Vizard told them he had been through all the rooms: the only chance, now, was the dining-room. "No," said Fanny, "we wish to get home: we are rather tired."

They went to the rail; and, at first, Vizard

was rather talkative, making his comments on the players; but the ladies were taciturn, and brought him to a stand, "Ah," thought he, "nothing interests them now; Adonis is not here." So he retired within himself.

When they reached the "Russie," he ordered a *petit souper* in an hour, and invited the ladies. Meantime they retired; Miss Maitland to her room, and Fanny, with Zoe, to hers. By this time Miss Dover had lost her alacrity, and would, I verily believe, have shunned a *tête-à-tête* if she could; but there was a slight paleness in Zoe's cheek, and a compression of the lips, which told her plainly that young lady meant to have it out with her. They both knew so well what was coming, that Zoe merely waved her to a chair, and leaned herself against the bed, and said, "Now, Fanny." So Fanny was brought to bay.

"Dear me," said she, piteously, "I don't know what to do, between you and Aunt Maitland. If I say all I think, I suppose you will hate me; and, if I don't, I shall be told I'm wicked, and don't warn an orphan girl. She flew at me like a bull-dog before your brother; she said I was twenty-five; and I only own to twenty-three.

And after all, what could I say? for I do feel I ought to give you the benefit of my experience, and make myself as disagreeable as *she* does. And I *have* given you a hint, and a pretty broad one; but you want such plain speaking."

"I do," said Zoe. "So please speak plainly—if you can."

"Ah, you *say* that."

"And I mean it. Never mind consequences; tell me the truth."

"Like a man, eh? and get hated."

"Men are well worth imitating, in some things. Tell me the truth, pleasant or not; and I shall always respect you."

"Bother respect. I am like the rest of us; I want to be loved a little bit. But there—I'm in for it. I have said too much, or too little. I know that. Well, Zoe, the long and the short is—you have a rival."

Zoe turned rather pale, but was not so much shaken as Fanny expected.

She received the blow in silence. But, after a while, she said, with some firmness, "Mademoiselle Klosking?"

"Oh, you are not quite blind, then."

"And pray which does he prefer?" asked Zoe, a little proudly.

"It is plain he likes you the best. But why does he fear her so? This is where you seem all in the dark. He flew out of the opera, lest she should see him."

"Oh! Absurd!"

"He cut you and Vizard, rather than call upon her with you."

"And so he did."

"He flew from the gambling-table the moment she entered the room."

"Behind him. She came in behind him."

"There was a large mirror in front of him."

"Oh, Fanny! oh!" and Zoe clasped her hands, piteously. But she recovered herself, and said, "After all, appearances are deceitful."

"Not so deceitful as men," said Fanny, sharply.

But Zoe clung to her straw. "Might not two things happen together? He is subject to bleeding at the nose. It is strange it should occur twice so: but it is possible."

"Zoe," said Fanny, gravely, "he is not subject to bleeding at the nose."

"Oh! *then*—but how can you know that? what right have you to say that?"

"I'll show you," said Fanny, and left the room.

She soon came back, holding something behind her back. Even at the last moment she was half unwilling. However, she looked down, and said, in a very peculiar tone, "Here is the handkerchief he put before his face at the opera; there!" and she threw it into Zoe's lap.

Zoe's nature revolted against evidence so obtained. She did not even take up the handkerchief. "What!" she cried: "you took it out of his pocket?"

"No."

"Then you have been in his room, and got it."

"*Nothing of the kind!* I sent Rosa."

"My maid!"

"Mine, for that job. I gave her half-a-crown, to borrow it for a pattern."

Zoe seized the handkerchief, and ran her eye over it in a moment. There was no trace of blood on it, and there were his initials, "E. S." in the corner. Her woman's eye fastened instantly on these. "Silk?" said she, and held it up to the light. "No. Hair!—golden hair. It is *hers!*" And she flung the handkerchief from her, as if it was a viper, and even when

on the ground eyed it with dilating orbs, and a hostile horror.

"La!" said Fanny; "fancy that! You are not blind now. You have seen more than me. I made sure it was yellow silk."

But this frivolous speech never even entered Zoe's ear. She was too deeply shocked. She went, feebly, and sat down in a chair, and covered her face with her hands.

Fanny eyed her with pity. "There," said she, almost crying, "I never tell the truth but I bitterly repent it."

Zoe took no notice of this droll apophthegm. Her hands began to work. "What shall I do?" she said; "what shall I do?"

"Oh, don't go on like that, Zoe!" cried Fanny. "After all, it is you he prefers. He ran away from her."

"Ah, yes. But why?—why? What has he done?"

"Jilted her, I suppose. Aunt Maitland thinks he is after money: and, you know, you have got money."

"Have I nothing else?" said the proud beauty; and lifted her bowed head, for a moment.

"You have everything. But you should look things in the face. Is that singer an unattractive woman?"

"Oh no; but she is not poor. Her kind of talent is paid enormously."

"That is true," said Fanny. "But perhaps she wastes it. She is a gambler, like himself."

"Let him go to her," said Zoe, wildly. "I will share no man's heart."

"He will never go to her, unless—well, unless we tell him that she has broken the bank with his money."

"If you think so badly of him, tell him then, and let him go. Oh, I am wretched! I am wretched!" She lifted her hands in despair, and began to cry and sob bitterly.

Fanny was melted at her distress, and kneeled to her, and cried with her.

Not being a girl of steady principle, she went round with the wind. "Dear Zoe," said she: "it is deeper than I thought. La! if you love him, why torment yourself?"

"No," said Zoe; "it is deceit and mystery that torment me. Oh, what shall I do? what shall I do?"

Fanny interpreted this vague exclamation of

sorrow, as asking advice, and said, "I dare not advise you; I can only tell you what I should do in your place. I should make up my mind at once, whether I loved the man, or only liked him. If I only liked him, I would turn him up at once."

"Turn him up? what is that?"

"Turn him off, then. If I loved him, I would not let any other woman have the least little bit of a chance to get him. For instance, I would not let him know this old sweetheart of his has won three thousand pounds at least, for I noted her winnings. Diamond cut diamond, my dear. He is concealing from you something or other about him and this Klosking; hide you this one little thing about the Klosking from him—till you get my gentleman safe to England."

"And this is love! I call it warfare."

"And love is warfare, three times out of four. Any way, it is for you to decide, Zoe. I do wish you had never seen the man. He is not what he seems. He is a poor adventurer, and a bundle of deceit."

"You are very hard on him. You don't know all."

"No, nor a quarter; and you know less. There, dear, dry your eyes and fight against it. After all, you know, you are mistress of the situation. I'll settle it for you, which way you like."

"You will? Oh, Fanny, you are very good!"

"Say indulgent, please. I'm not good, and never will be, if *I can possibly help*. I despise good people; they are as weak as water. But I do like you, Zoe Vizard, better than any other woman in the world. That is not saying very much; my taste is for men. I think them gods, and devils, compared with us; and I do admire gods and devils. No matter, dear. Kiss me, and say, 'Fanny, act for me,' and I'll do it."

Zoe kissed her, and then, by a truly virginal impulse, hid her burning face in her hands and said nothing at all.

Fanny gave her plenty of time, and then said, kindly, "Well, dear?"

Then Zoe murmured, scarce audibly, "Act—*as if*—I loved him."

And still she kept her face covered with her hands.

Fanny was anything but surprised at this conclusion of the struggle. She said, with a

certain alacrity, "Very well, I will: so now bathe your eyes and come in to supper."

"No, no; please go and make an excuse for me."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. I won't be told by-and-by I have done wrong. I will do your business, but it shall be in your hearing. Then you can interfere, if you choose. Only you had better not put your word in, till you see what I am driving at."

With a little more encouragement, Zoe was prevailed on to sponge her tearful eyes, and compose herself and join Harrington at supper.

Miss Maitland soon retired, pleading fatigue and packing; and she had not been gone long, when Fanny gave her friend a glance and began upon Harrington.

"You are very fond of Mr Severne, are you not?" said she.

"I am," said Vizard, stoutly preparing for battle. "You are not, perhaps."

Fanny laughed at this prompt pugnacity. "Oh yes, I am," said she; "devoted. But he has a weakness, you must own. He is rather fond of gambling."

"He is, I am sorry to say. It is his one fault. Most of us have two or three."

"Don't you think it would be a pity if he was to refuse to go with us to-morrow? was to prefer to stay here and gamble?"

"No fear of that: he has given me his word of honour."

"Still I think it would be hardly safe to tempt him. If you go and tell him that friend of his won such a lot of money, he will want to stop; and, if he does not stop, he will go away miserable. You know they began betting with his money, though they went on with their own."

"Oh, did they? What was his own money?"

"How much was it, Zoe?"

"Fifty pounds."

"Well," said Vizard, "you must admit it is hard he should lose his own money. And yet I own I am most anxious to get him away from this place. Indeed I have a project; I want him to rusticate a few months at our place, while I set my lawyer to look into his affairs and see if his estate cannot be cleared. I'll be bound the farms are underlet. What does the admirable Crichton know about such trifles?"

Fanny looked at Zoe, whose colour was rising high at all this. "Well," said she, "when you

gentlemen fall in love *with each other*, you certainly are faithful creatures."

"Because we can count on fidelity in return," said Vizard. He thought a little and said, "Well, as to the other thing—you leave it to me. Let us understand one another. Nothing we saw at the gambling-table is to be mentioned by us?"

"No."

"Crichton is to be taken to England for his good?"

"Yes."

"And I am to be grateful to you for your co-operation in this?"

"You can, if you like."

"And you will secure an agreeable companion for the rest of the tour, eh? my diplomatic cousin, and my silent sister?"

"Yes; but it is too bad of you to see through a poor girl, and her little game, like that. I own he is a charming companion."

Fanny's cunning eyes twinkled, and Zoe blushed crimson to see her noble brother manipulated by this artful minx, and then flattered for his perspicacity.

From that moment a revulsion took place in

her mind, and pride fought furiously with love —for a time.

This was soon made apparent to Fanny Dover. When they retired, Zoe looked very gloomy, so Fanny asked, rather sharply, "Well, what is the matter now? didn't I do it cleverly?"

"Yes, yes, too cleverly. Oh, Fanny, I begin to revolt against myself."

"This is nice," said Fanny. "Go on, dear. It is just what I ought to have expected. You were there. You had only to interfere. You didn't. And now you are discontented."

"Not with you. Spare me. You are not to blame: and I am very unhappy. I am losing my self-respect. Oh, if this goes on, I shall hate him."

"Yes, dear—for five minutes; and then love him double. Come, don't deceive yourself, and don't torment yourself. All your trouble, we shall leave it behind us to-morrow, and every hour will take us farther from it."

With this practical view of matters, she kissed Zoe, and hurried to bed.

But Zoe scarcely closed her eyes all night.

Severne did not reach the hotel till past eleven o'clock, and went straight to his own room.

CHAPTER XI.

Ashmead accompanied Mademoiselle Klosking to her apartment. It was lighted, and the cloth laid for supper under the chandelier, a snow-white Hamburg damask. Ashmead took the winnings out of his pocket, and proudly piled the gold and crumpled notes in one prodigious mass upon the linen, that shone like satin, and made the gold look doubly inviting. Then he drew back and gloated on it. The Klosking, too, stood and eyed the pile of wealth with amazement and a certain reverence. "Let me count it," said Ashmead. He did so, and it came to four thousand nine hundred and eighty-one pounds, English money. "And to think," said he, "if you had taken my advice you would not have a penny of this!"

"I'll take your advice now," said she. "I will never gamble again."

"Well, take my advice and lock up the swag before a creature sees it. Homburg is full of thieves."

She complied, and took away the money in a napkin.

Ashmead called after her to know might he order supper.

"If you will be so kind."

Ashmead rejoiced at this unguarded permission, and ordered a supper that made Karl stare.

The Klosking returned in about half an hour, clad in a crisp *peignoir*.

Ashmead confronted her. "I have ordered a bottle of champagne," said he. Her answer surprised him. "You have done well. We must now begin to prove the truth of the old proverb, 'Ce que vient par le flûte s'en va au tambour.'"

At supper Mr Ashmead was the chief drinker, and, by a natural consequence, the chief speaker: he held out brilliant prospects; he favoured the Klosking with a discourse on advertising. No talent availed without it; large posters, pictures, window-cards, &c.: but as her talent was superlative, he must now endeavour to keep up with it by invention in his line—the puff circum-

stantial, the puff poetic, the puff anecdotal, the puff controversial, all tending to blow the fame of the Klosking in every eye, and ring it in every ear. "You take my advice," said he, "and devote this money, every penny of it, to Publicity. Don't you touch a single shiner for anything that does not return a hundred per cent. Publicity does, when the article is prime."

"You forget," said she, "this money does not all belong to me. Another can claim half; the gentleman with whom we are in partnership."

Ashmead looked literally blue. "Nonsense!" said he, roughly; "he can only claim his fifty pounds."

"Nay, my friend. I took two equal sums,—one was his, one mine."

"That has nothing to do with it. He told me to bet for him. I didn't: and I shall take him back his fifty pounds, and say so. I know where to find him."

"Where?"

"That is my business. Don't you go mad now, and break my heart."

"Well, my friend, we will talk of it to-morrow morning. It certainly is not very clear; and

perhaps, after I have prayed and slept, I may see more plainly what is right."

Ashmead observed she was pale, and asked her, with concern, if she was ill.

"No, not ill," said she, "but worn out. My friend, I knew not at the time how great was my excitement; but now I am conscious that this afternoon I have lived a week. My very knees give way under me."

Upon this admission Ashmead hurried her to bed.

She slept soundly for some hours; but, having once awakened, she fell into a half sleepless state, and was full of dreams and fancies. These preyed on her so, that she rose and despatched a servant to Ashmead, with a line in pencil begging him to take an early breakfast with her, at nine o'clock.

As soon as ever he came, she began upon the topic of last night. She had thought it over, and said, frankly, she was not without hopes the gentleman, if he was really a gentleman, might be contented with something less than half. But she really did not see how she could refuse him some share of her winnings, should he demand it. "Think of it," said she. "The poor man

loses—£400, I think you said. Then he says, 'bet you for me,' and goes away, trusting to your honour. His luck changes in my hands. Is he to lose all when he loses, and win nothing when he wins, merely because I am so fortunate as to win much? However, we shall hear what *he* says. You gave him your address."

"I said I was at the 'Golden Star,'" growled Ashmead, in a tone that plainly showed he was vexed with himself for being so communicative.

"Then he will pay us a visit as soon as he hears; so I need give myself no further trouble."

"Why should you? Wait till he comes," said crafty Ashmead.

Ina Klosking coloured. She felt her friend was tempting her; and felt she was not quite beyond the power of temptation.

"What was he like?" said she, to turn the conversation.

"The handsomest young fellow I ever saw."

"Young, of course?"

"Yes, quite a boy; at least he looked a boy. To be sure his talk was not like a boy's; very precocious, I should say."

"What a pity! to begin gambling so young!"

"Oh, he is all right; if he loses every far-

thing of his own he will marry money. Any woman would have him. You never saw such a curled darling."

"Dark or fair?"

"Fair. Pink and white, like a girl: a hand like a lady."

"Indeed! Fine eyes?"

"Splendid."

"What colour?"

"I don't know. Lord bless you! a man does not examine another man's eyes, like you ladies. However, now I think of it, there was one curious thing I should know him by anywhere."

"And what was that?"

"Well, you see, his hair was brown; but just above the forehead he had one lock that was gold itself."

While he said this, the Klosking's face underwent the most rapid and striking changes; and at last she sat looking at him wildly.

It was some time before he noticed her, and then he was quite alarmed at her strange expression. "What is the matter?" said he. "Are you ill?"

"No, no, no; only a little—astonished. Such a thing as that is very rare."

"That it is. I never saw a case before."

"Not one, in all your life?" asked she, eagerly.

"Well, no; not that I remember."

"Excuse me a minute," said Ina Klosking, and went hurriedly from the room.

Ashmead thought her manner very strange, but concluded she was a little unhinged by yesterday's excitement. Moreover, there faced him an omelet of enormous size, and savoury. He thought this worthy to divide a man's attention even with a great creature's tantrums. He devoted himself to it, and it occupied him so agreeably, that he did not observe the conduct of Mademoiselle Klosking on her return. She placed three photographs softly on the table, not very far from him, and then resumed her seat; but her eye never left him: and she gave monosyllabic and almost impatient replies to everything he mumbled with his mouth full of omelet.

When he had done his omelet, he noticed the photographs. They were all coloured. He took one up. It was an elderly woman, sweet, venerable, and fair-haired. He looked at Ina, and at the photograph, and said, "This is your mother."

"It is."

"It is angelic—as might be expected."

He took up another.

"This is your brother, I suppose. Stop. Hullo!—what is this?—Are my eyes making a fool of me?"

He held out the photograph at arm's length, and stared from it to her. "Why, madam," said he, in an awe-struck voice, "this is the gentleman—the player; I'd swear to him."

Ina started from her seat while he spoke. "Ah!" she cried, "I thought so—my Edward!" and sat down, trembling violently.

Ashmead ran to her, and sprinkled water in her face, for she seemed ready to faint: but she murmured, "No, no;" and soon the colour rushed into her face, and she clasped her hands together, and cried, "I have found him!" and the storm of varying emotions ended in tears that gave her relief.

It was a long time before she spoke; but when she did, her spirit and her natural strength of character took the upper hand. "Where is he?" said she, firmly.

"He told me he was at the 'Russie.'"

"We will go there at once. When is the next train?"

Ashmead looked at his watch. "In ten minutes. We can hardly do it."

"Yes, we can. Order a carriage this instant. I will be ready in one minute."

They caught the train, and started.

As they glided along, Ashmead begged her not to act too hurriedly, and expose herself to insult.

"Who will dare insult me?"

"Nobody, I hope. Still I cannot bear you to go into a strange hotel hunting this man. It is monstrous; but I'm afraid you will not be welcome. Something has just occurred to me; the reason he ran off so sudden was he saw you coming. There was a mirror opposite. Ah, we need not have feared he would come back for his winnings. Idiot—villain!"

"You stab me to the heart," said Ina. "He ran away at sight of me? Ah, Jesu, pity me! What have I done to him?"

Honest Ashmead had much ado not to blubber at this patient cry of anguish, though the woman herself shed no tear just then. But his judgment was undimmed by passion, and he gave her the benefit. "Take my advice," said he, "and work it this way. Come in a close carriage to the side street that is nearest the 'Russie.' I'll go in to

the hotel, and ask for him by his name—what is his name?"

"Mr Edward Severne."

"And say that I was afraid to stake his money; but a friend of mine, that is a bold player, undertook it, and had a great run of luck. 'There is money owing you,' says I, 'and my friend has brought it.' Then he is sure to come. You will have your veil down, I'll open the carriage-door, and tell him to jump in, and, when you have got him, you must make him hear reason. I'll give you a good chance—I'll shut the carriage-door."

CHAPTER XII.

Ina smiled at his ingenuity—her first smile that day. "You are indeed a friend," said she. "He fears reproaches; but, when he finds he is welcome, he will stay with me; and he shall have money to play with, and amuse himself how he likes. I kept too tight a rein on him, poor fellow; my good mother taught me prudence."

"Yes; but," said Ashmead, "you must promise me one thing, not to let him know how much money you have won, and not to go like a goose, and give him a lot at once. It never pays to part with power in this wicked world. You give him twenty pounds a-day, to play with, whenever he is cleaned out. Then the money will last your time, and he will never leave you."

"Oh, how cold-hearted, and wise, you are!" said she. "But such a humiliating position for *him!*"

"Don't you be silly. You won't keep him any other way."

"I will be as wise as I can," sighed Ina. "I have had a bitter lesson. Only bring him to me, and then, who knows? I am a change: my love may revive his, and none of these pitiable precautions may be needed. They would lower us both."

Ashmead groaned aloud. "I see," said he. "He'll soon clean you out. Ah, well! he can't rob you of your voice, and he can't rob you of your Ashmead."

They soon reached Frankfort. Ashmead put her into a carriage as agreed, and went to the "Russie."

Ina sat, with her veil down, in the carriage, and waited Ashmead's return with Severne. He was a long time coming. She began to doubt; and then to fear; and wonder why he was so long.

At last he came in sight.

He was alone.

As he drew nearer she saw his face was thoroughly downcast.

"My dear friend," he faltered, "you are out of luck to-day."

"He will not come with you?"

"Oh, he would come fast enough, if he was there; but he is gone."

"Gone! To Homburg?"

"No. Unfortunately he is gone to England. Went off, by the fast train, an hour ago."

Ina fell back, in silence, just as if she had been struck in the face.

"He is travelling with an English family, and they have gone straight home. Here are their names. I looked in the visitors' book, and talked to the servant, and all. Mr Vizard, Miss Vizard——"

"Vizard?"

"Yes—Miss Maitland, Miss Dover. See, I wrote them all down."

"Oh, I am unfortunate! Why was I ever born?"

"Don't say that, don't say that. It is annoying: but we shall be able to trace him now; and, besides, I see other ways of getting hold of him."

Ina broke in upon his talk; "Take me to the nearest church," she cried. "Man's words are vain. Ah, Jesu, let me cry to thee!"

He took her to the nearest church. She went

in, and prayed for full two hours. She came out, pale and listless, and Ashmead got her home how he could. Her very body seemed all crushed and limp. Ashmead left her, sad at heart himself.

So long as she was in sight Ashmead could think only of her misery. But the moment she was out of sight, he remembered the theatre. She was announced for Rosina that very night. He saw trouble of all sorts before him. He ran to the theatre, in great alarm, and told the manager she was taken very ill. He must change the bill.

"Impossible!" was the reply. "If she can't sing, I close."

Ashmead went back to the "Star."

Ina was in her bedroom.

He sent in a line,—"Can you sing to-night? If not, he says he must close."

The reply came back in rather a trembling hand. "I suffer too much by falsehood to break faith myself. I shall pray till night: and then I shall sing. If I die on the stage, all the better for me."

Was not this a great soul?

CHAPTER XIII.

THAT same morning, our English party snatched a hasty breakfast in travelling attire. Severne was not there ; but sent word to Vizard he should be there in time.

This filled the cup : Zoe's wounded pride had been rising higher and higher all the night, and she came down rather pale, from broken rest, and sternly resolved. She had a few serious words with Fanny, and sketched her out a little map of conduct, which showed that she had thought the matter well over.

But her plan bade fair to be deranged : Severne was not at the station : then came a change : Zoe was restless, and cast anxious glances.

But at the second bell he darted into the carriage, as if he had just despatched some wonderful business to get there in time. Whilst the train was starting, he busied himself in

arranging his things; but, once started, he put on his sunny look, and prepared to be, as usual, the life and soul of the party.

But, for once, he met a frost. Zoe was wrapped in impenetrable *hauteur*, and Fanny in polite indifference. Never was loss of favour more ably marked, without the least ill-breeding, and no good handle given to seek an explanation.

No doubt a straightforward man, with justice on his side, would have asked them plump, whether he had been so unfortunate as to offend, and how; and this was what Zoe secretly wished, however she might seem to repel it. But Severne was too crafty for that. He had learned the art of waiting.

After a few efforts at conversation, and smooth rebuffs, he put on a surprised, mortified, and sorrowful air, and awaited the attack, which he felt would come soon or late.

This skilful inertia baffled the fair, in a man; in a woman, they might have expected it; and, after a few hours, Zoe's patience began to wear out.

The train stopped for twenty minutes, and, even while they were snatching a little refreshment, the dark locks and the blonde came very

close together; and Zoe, exasperated by her own wounded pride and the sullen torpor of her lover, gave Fanny fresh instructions, which nobody was better qualified to carry out than that young lady, as nobody was better able to baffle female strategy than the gentleman.

This time, however, the ladies had certain advantages, to balance his subtlety, and his habit of stating anything true or false, that suited his immediate purpose.

They opened very cat-like. Fanny affected to be outgrowing her ill-humour, and volunteered a civil word or two to Severne. Thereupon Zoe turned sharply away from Fanny, as if she disapproved her conduct: and took a book. This was pretty sly, and done, I suppose, to remove all idea of concert between the fair assailants; whereas it was a secret signal for the concert to come into operation, it being Fanny's part to play upon Severne, and Zoe's to watch, from her corner, every lineament of his face under fire.

"By the way, Mr Severne," said Fanny, apropos of a church on a hill they were admiring, "did you get your winnings?"

"My winnings! You are sarcastical."

"Am I? Really I did not intend to be."

"No, no; forgive me; but that did seem a little cruel. Miss Dover, I was a heavy loser."

"Not whilst we were there. The lady and gentleman, who played with your money, won, oh, such a deal!"

"The devil they did!"

"Yes: did you not stay behind, last night, to get it? We never saw you at the 'Russie.'"

"I was very ill."

"Bleeding at the nose?"

"No; that always relieves me when it comes. I am subject to fainting fits: once I lay insensible so long they were going to bury me. Now do pray tell me what makes you fancy anybody won a lot with my money."

"Well, I will. You know you left fifty pounds for a friend to bet with."

Severne stared; but was too eager for information, to question her how she knew this. "Yes, I did," said he.

"And you really don't know what followed?"

"Good heavens! how can I?"

"Well, then, as you ran out—to faint, Mademoiselle Klosking came in, just as she did at the opera, you know, the time before, when you ran out—to bleed. She slipped into your chair the

very moment you left it; and your friend with the flaming neck-tie told her you had set him to bet with your money. By the by, Mr Severne, how on earth do you and Mademoiselle Klosking, who have both so much taste in dress, come to have a mutual friend, vulgarity in person, with a velveteen coat and an impossible neck-tie?"

"What are you talking about, Miss Dover? I do just know Mademoiselle Klosking; I met her in society in Vienna, two years ago; but that cad I commissioned to bet for me, I never saw before in my life. You are keeping me on tenter-hooks. My money—my money—my money! If you have a heart in your bosom, tell me what became of my money."

He was violent, for the first time since they had known him, and his eyes flashed fire.

"Well," said Fanny, beginning to be puzzled and rather frightened, "this man, who you *say* was a new acquaintance——"

"Whom I *say*? Do you mean to tell me I am a liar?" He fumbled eagerly in his breast-pocket, and produced a card. "There," said he, "this is the card he gave me, 'Mr Joseph Ashmead.' Now may this train dash over the

next viaduct, and take you and Miss Vizard to heaven, and me to hell, if I ever saw Mr Joseph Ashmead's face before. THE MONEY! — THE MONEY!"

He uttered this furiously; and it is a curious fact; but Zoe turned red, and Fanny pale. It was really in quite a cowed voice Miss Dover went on to say, "La! don't fly out like that. Well, then, the man refused to bet with your money; so then Mademoiselle Klosking said she would; and she played—oh, how she did play! She doubled, and doubled, and doubled, hundreds upon hundreds. She made a mountain of gold, and a pyramid of bank-notes; and she never stopped till she broke the bank — there!"

"With my money?" gasped Severne.

"Yes, with your money: your friend with the loud tie pocketed it; I beg your pardon, not your friend—only hers. Harrington says he is her *cher ami*."

"The money is mine!" he shrieked. "I don't care who played with it, it is mine. And the fellow had the impudence to send me back my £50 to the 'Russie.'"*

* I think I see Vizard's hand in this.

"What! you gave him your address?" This with an involuntary glance of surprise at Zoe.

"Of course. Do you think I leave a man £50 to play with, and don't give him my address? He has won thousands with my money, and sent me back my fifty, for a blind, the thief!"

"Well, really it is too bad," said Fanny. "But, there — I'm afraid you must make the best of it. Of course their sending back your £50 shows they mean to keep their winnings."

"You talk like a woman," said he; then, grinding his teeth, and stretching out a long muscular arm, he said, "I'll take the blackguard by the throat, and tear it out of him, though I tear his life out along with it."

All this time Zoe had been looking at him with concern, and even with admiration. He seemed more beautiful than ever, to her, under the influence of passion, and more of a man.

"Mr Severne," said she, "be calm. Fanny has misled you, without intending it. She did not hear all that passed between those two; I did. The velveteen and neck-tie man refused to bet with your money. It was Mademoiselle Klosking who betted, and with her own money. She took £25 of her own, and £25 of yours, and

won two or three hundred in a few moments. Surely, as a gentleman, you cannot ask a lady to do more than repay you your £25."

Severne was a little cowed by Zoe's interference. He stood his ground; but sullenly, instead of violently.

"Miss Vizard, if I was weak enough to trust a lady with my money at a gambling-table I should expect foul play; for I never knew a lady yet who would not cheat *at cards*, if she could. I trusted my money to a tradesman to bet with. If he takes a female partner; that is no business of mine, he is responsible all the same, and I'll have my money."

He jumped up, at the word, and looked out at the window: he even fumbled with the door, and tried to open it.

"You had better jump out," said Fanny.

"And then they would keep my money for good. No;" said he, "I'll wait for the nearest station." He sank back into his seat, looking unutterable things.

Fanny looked rather rueful, at first; then she said, spitefully, "You must be very sure of your influence with your old sweetheart. You forget she has got another now: a tradesman, too. He

will cling to the money, and make her cling to it. Their sending the £50 shows that."

Zoe's eyes were on him with microscopic power, and, with all his self-command, she saw him wince and change colour, and give other signs that this shaft had told in many ways.

He shut his countenance the next moment; but it had opened, and Zoe was on fire with jealousy and suspicion.

Fluctuating Fanny regretted the turn things had taken. She did not want to lose a pleasant male companion, and she felt sure Zoe would be unhappy, and cross to her, if he went. "Surely, Mr Severne," she said, "you will not desert us, and go back for so small a chance: why, we are a hundred and fifty miles from Homburg, and all the nearer to dear old England. There, there—we must be kinder to you, and make you forget this misfortune."

Thus spoke the trimmer. The reply took her by surprise.

"And whose fault is it that I am obliged to get out a hundred and fifty miles from Homburg? You knew all this. You could have got me a delay of a few hours to go and get my due. You know I am a poor man. With

all your cleverness, you don't know what made me poor, or you would feel some remorse, perhaps; but you know I am poor when most I could wish I was rich: you have heard that old woman there fling my poverty in my teeth; yet you could keep this from me—just to assist a cheat and play upon the feelings of a friend. Now, what good has that done you, to inflict misery on me in sport, on a man who never gave you a moment's pain if he could help it?"

Fanny looked ruefully this way and that, her face began to work, and she laid down her arms, if a lady can be said to do that, who lays down a strong weapon and takes up a stronger; in other words, she burst out crying, and said no more. You see she was poor herself.

Severne took no notice of her; he was accustomed to make women cry. He thrust his head out of the window in hopes of seeing a station near, and his whole being was restless as if he would like to jump out.

While he was in this condition of mind and body, the hand he had once kissed so tenderly, and shocked Miss Maitland, passed an envelope over his shoulder, with two lines written on it in pencil:

"If you GO BACK TO HOMBURG, oblige ME BY REMAINING there."

This demands an explanation, but it shall be brief.

Fanny's shrewd hint, that the money could only be obtained from Mademoiselle Klosking, had pierced Zoe through and through. Her mind grasped all that had happened, all that impended, and, wisely declining to try and account for or reconcile all the jarring details, she settled, with a woman's broad instinct, that, somehow or other, his going back to Homburg meant going back to Mademoiselle Klosking. Whether that lady would buy him or not, she did not know. But going back to her, meant going a journey to see a rival, with consequences illimitable.

She had courage; she had pride; she had jealousy. She resolved to lose her lover, or have him all to herself. Share him she would not, nor even endure the torture of the doubt.

She took an envelope out of her satchel, and, with the pencil attached to her *chatelaine*, wrote the fatal words, "If you go back to Homburg, oblige me by remaining there."

At this moment she was not goaded by pique, nor any petty feeling. Indeed, his reproach to Fanny had touched her a little ; and it was with the tear in her eye she came to the resolution, and handed him that line, which told him she knew her value, and, cost what it might, would part with any man for ever rather than share him with the Klosking or any other woman.

Severne took the line, eyed it, realised it, fell back from the window, and dropped into his seat. This gave Zoe a consoling sense of power. She had seen her lover raging and restless, and wanting to jump out, yet now beheld him literally felled with a word from her hand.

He leaned his head in his hand in a sort of broken-down, collapsed, dogged way that moved her pity, though hardly her respect.

By-and-by it struck her as a very grave thing that he did not reply by word, nor even by look. He could decide with a glance, and why did he hesitate ? Was he really balancing her against Mademoiselle Klosking weighted with a share of his winnings ?

This doubt was wormwood to her pride and self-respect ; but his crushed attitude allayed in some degree the mere irritation his doubt caused.

The minutes passed, and the miles : still that broken figure sat before her, with his face hidden by his white hand.

Zoe's courage began to falter. Misgivings seized her. She had made that a matter of love which, after all, to a man, might be a mere matter of business. He was poor, too, and she had thrust her jealousy between him and money. He might have his pride too, and rebel against her affront.

As for his thoughts, under that crushed exterior, which he put on for a blind, they were so deliberate and calculating, that I shall not mix them on this page with that pure and generous creature's. Another time will do to reveal his sordid arithmetic.

As for Zoe, she settled down into wishing, with all her heart, she had not submitted her lover so imperiously to a test, the severity of which she now saw she had underrated.

Presently the speed of the train began to slacken—all too soon. She now dreaded to learn her fate. Was she, or was she not, worth a few thousand pounds ready money ?

A signal-post was passed, proving that they were about to enter a station. Yet another.

Now the wheels were hardly turning. Now the platform was visible. Yet he never moved his white, delicate, womanish fingers from his forehead, but remained still absorbed, and looked undecided.

At last the motion entirely ceased. Then, as she turned her head to glean, if possible, the name of the place, he stole a furtive glance at her. She was pallid, agitated : he resolved upon his course.

As soon as the train stopped, he opened the door and jumped out, without a word to Zoe, or even a look.

Zoe turned pale as death. "I have lost him," said she.

"No, no," cried Fanny. "See, he has not taken his cane and umbrella."

"*They* will not keep him from flying to his money and her," moaned Zoe. "Did you not see? He never once looked at me. He could not. I am sick at heart."

This set Fanny fluttering. "There, let me out to speak to him."

"Sit quiet," said Zoe, sternly.

"No, no. If you love him——"

"I do love him—passionately. And *there-*

fore I'll die, rather than share him with any one."

"But it is dreadful to be fixed here, and not allowed to move hand or foot."

"It is the lot of women. Let me feel the hand of a friend, that is all; for I am sick at heart."

Fanny gave her her hand, and all the sympathy her shallow nature had to bestow.

Zoe sat motionless, gripping her friend's hand almost convulsively, a statue of female fortitude.

This suspense could not last long. The officials ordered the travellers to the carriages: doors were opened, and slammed; the engine gave a snort, and only at that moment did Mr Edward Severne tear the door open and bolt into the carriage.

Oh, it was pitiable, but lovely, to see the blood rush into Zoe's face, and the fire into her eye, and the sweet mouth expand in a smile of joy and triumph.

She sat a moment, almost paralysed with pleasure, and then cast her eyes down, lest their fire should proclaim her feelings too plainly.

As for Severne, he only glanced at her as he came in, and then shunned her eye. He pre-

sented to her the grave, resolved countenance of a man, who has been forced to a decision, but means to abide by it.

In reality he was delighted at the turn things had taken. The money was not necessarily lost, since he knew where it was; and Zoe had compromised herself beyond retreating. He intended to wear this anxious face a long while. But his artificial snow had to melt; so real a sun shone full on it; the moment he looked full at Zoe, she repaid him with such a point-blank beam of glorious tenderness and gratitude, as made him thrill with passion as well as triumph. He felt her whole heart was his, and from that hour, his poverty would never be allowed to weigh with her. He cleared up, and left off acting, because it was superfluous; he had now only to bask in sunshine. Zoe, always tender, but coy till this moment, made love to him like a young goddess. Even Fanny yielded to the solid proof of sincerity he had given, and was downright affectionate.

He was king. And from one gradation to another, they entered Cologne with Severne seated between the two girls, each with a hand in his, and a great disposition to pet him and spoil him;

more than once, indeed, a delicate head just grazed each of his square shoulders; but candour compels me to own that their fatigue, and the yawing of the carriage at the time, were more to blame than the tired girls; for at the enormity there was a prompt retirement to a distance. Miss Maitland was in the next compartment fast asleep; and Vizard, from the first, had preferred male companions and tobacco.

At Cologne they visited the pride of Germany, that mighty cathedral, which the middle ages projected, commenced, and left to decay of old age before completion, and our enterprising age will finish; but went on the same day.

Before they reached England, the love-making between Severne and Zoe, though it never passed the bounds of good taste, was so apparent to any female eye, that Miss Maitland remonstrated severely with Fanny.

But the trimmer was now won to the other side. She would not offend Aunt Maitland by owning her conversion. She said, hypocritically, "I am afraid it is no use objecting at present, aunt. The attachment is too strong on both sides. And, whether he is poor or not, he has sacrificed his money to her feelings, and so, now,

she feels bound in honour. I know her; she won't listen to a word now, aunt: why irritate her? She would quarrel with both of us in a moment."

"Poor girl!" said Miss Maitland; and took the hint. She had still an arrow in her quiver —Vizard.

In mid-channel, ten miles south of Dover, she caught him in a lucid interval of non-smoke. She reminded him he had promised her to give Mr Severne a hint about Zoe.

"So I did," said he.

"And have you?"

"Well, no; to tell the truth, I forgot."

"Then please do it now; for they are going on worse than ever."

"I'll warn the fool," said he.

He did warn him, and in the following terms:

"Look here, old fellow. I hear you are—hum—paying a good deal of attention to my sister Zoe."

No answer. Severne on his guard.

"Now you had better mind your eye. She is a very pretty girl, and you may find yourself entangled before you know where you are."

Severne hung his head. "Of course I know it is great presumption in me."

"Presumption?—fiddlestick! Such a man as you are ought not to be tied to any woman, or, if you must be, you ought not to go cheap. Mind, Zoe is a poor girl; only ten thousand in the world. Flirt with who you like; there is no harm in that; but don't get seriously entangled with any of them. Good sisters, and good daughters, and good flirts, make bad wives."

"Oh, then," said Severne, "it is only on her account you object."

"Well, principally. And I don't exactly object; I warn. In the first place, as soon as ever we get into Barfordshire, she will most likely jilt you. You may be only her Continental lover. How can I tell, *or you either?* And if not, and you were to be weak enough to marry her, she would develop unexpected vices directly—they all do; and you are not rich enough to live in a house of your own, you would have to live in mine; a fine fate for a rising blade like you."

"What a terrible prospect! to be tied to the best friend in England, as well as the loveliest woman."

"Oh, if that is the view you take," said Vizard, beaming with delight, "it is no use talking reason to *you*."

When they reached London, Vizard gave Miss Maitland an outline of this conversation; and, so far from seeing the humour of it—which, nevertheless, was pretty strong, and characteristic of the man and his one foible—she took the huff, and would not even stay to dinner at the hotel. She would go into her own county by the next train, bag and baggage.

Mr Severne was the only one who offered to accompany her to the Great Western Railway. She declined. He insisted; went with her; got her ticket, numbered and arranged her packages, and saw her safely off, with an air of profound respect and admirably-feigned regret.

That she was the dupe of his art, may be doubted: that he lost nothing by it, is certain. Men are not ruined by civility. As soon as she was seated, she said, "I beg, sir, you will waste no more time with me. Mr Severne, you have behaved to me like a gentleman, and that is very unusual in a man of your age nowadays. I cannot alter my opinion about my niece and you: but I *am* sorry you are a poor gentleman

—much too poor to marry her—and I wish I could make you a rich one; but I cannot. There is my hand."

You should have seen the air of tender veneration with which the young Machiavel bowed over her hand, and even imprinted a light touch on it with his smooth lips.

Then he retired, disconsolate, and, once out of sight, whipped into a gin-palace and swallowed a quartern of neat brandy, to take the taste out of his mouth as he pretended. "Go it, Ned," said he, to himself; "you can't afford to make enemies."

The old lady went off bitter against the whole party *except Mr Severne;* and he retired to his friends, disembarrassed of the one foe he had not turned into a downright friend, but only disarmed. Well does the great Voltaire recommend what he well calls "le grand art de plaire."

Vizard sent Harris into Barfordshire, to prepare for the comfort of the party, and to light fires in all the bedrooms, though it was summer, and to see the beds, blankets, and sheets aired at the very fires of the very rooms they were to be used in. This sacred office he never trusted

to a housekeeper: he used even to declare, as the result of experience, that it was beyond the intellect of any woman really to air mattresses, blankets, and sheets—all three. He had also a printed list he used to show about, of five acquaintances, stout fellows all, whom "little bits of women" (such was his phraseology) had laid low with damp beds, having crippled two for life with rheumatism and lumbago, and sent three to their long home.

Meantime Severne took the ladies to every public attraction by day and night; and Vizard thanked him, before the fair, for his consideration in taking them off his hands; and Severne retorted by thanking him for leaving them on his.

It may seem, at first, a vile selection; but I am going to ask the ladies, who honour me with their attention, to follow, not that gay amorous party of three, but this solitary cynic on his round.

Taking a turn round the garden in Leicester Square, which was new to him, Harrington Vizard's observant eye saw a young lady rise up from a seat, to go, but turn pale directly, and sit down again upon the arm of the seat as if for support.

"Hullo!" said Vizard, in his blunt way, "*you* are not well. What can I do for you?"

"I am all right," said she; "please go on,"—the latter words in a tone that implied she was not a novice, and the attentions of gentlemen to strange ladies were suspected.

"I beg your pardon," said Vizard, coolly. "You are not all right. You look as if you were going to faint."

"What, are my lips blue?"

"No; but they are pale."

"Well, then, it is not a case of fainting. It *may* be exhaustion."

"You know best. What shall we do?"

"Why, nothing. Yes; mind our own business."

"With all my heart; my business just now is to offer you some restorative — a glass of wine."

"Oh yes! The idea of me going into a public-house with you! Besides, I don't believe in stimulants. Strength can only enter the human body one way. I know what is the matter with me."

"What is it?"

"I am not obliged to tell *you*."

"Of course you are not obliged; but you might as well."

"Well, then, it is Hunger."

"Hunger!"

"Hunger — famine — starvation. Don't you know English?"

"I hope you are not serious, madam," said Vizard, very gravely. "However, if ladies will say such things as that, men with stomachs in their bosoms must act accordingly. Oblige me by taking my arm, as you are weak, and we will adjourn to that eating-house over the way."

"Much obliged," said the lady, satirically; "our acquaintance is not *quite* long enough for that."

He looked at her; a tall, slim, young lady— black merino, by no means new, clean cuffs and collar, leaning against the chair for support, and yet sacrificing herself to conventional propriety, and even withstanding him with a pretty little air of defiance that was pitiable, her pallor and the weakness of her body considered.

The poor woman-hater's bowels began to yearn. "Look here, you little spitfire," said he; "if you don't instantly take my arm, I'll catch you up, and carry you over, with no more

trouble than you would carry a thread-paper."

She looked him up and down very keenly, and at last with a slight expression of feminine approval, the first she had vouchsafed him. Then she folded her arms, and levelled her little nose at him like a bayonet. "You daren't. I'll call the police."

"If you do, I'll tell them you are my little cousin, mad as a March hare: starving, and won't eat. Come, how is it to be?" He advanced upon her.

"You can't be in earnest, sir," said she, with sudden dignity.

"Am I not, though? You don't know *me*. I am used to be obeyed. If you don't go with me like a sensible girl, I'll carry you—to your dinner—like a ruffian."

"Then I'll go—like a lady," said she, with sudden humility.

He offered her his arm. She passed hers within; but leaned as lightly as possible on it, and her poor pale face was a little pink as they went.

He entered the eating-house, and asked for two portions of cold roast beef, not to keep her waiting. They were brought.

"Sir," said she, with a subjugated air, "will you be so good as cut up the meat small, and pass it to me a bit or two at a time?"

He was surprised, but obeyed her orders.

"And if you could make me talk a little? Because, at sight of the meat so near me, I feel like a tigress—poor human nature! Sir, I have not eaten meat for a week, nor food of any kind this two days."

"Good God!"

"So I must be prudent. People have gorged themselves with furious eating under those circumstances; that is why I asked you to supply me slowly. Thank you. You need not look at me like that. Better folk than I have *died* of hunger. Something tells me I have reached the lowest spoke, when I have been indebted to a stranger for a meal."

Vizard felt the water come into his eyes; but he resisted that pitiable weakness. "Bother that nonsense!" said he. "I'll introduce myself, and then you can't throw *stranger* in my teeth. I am Harrington Vizard, a Barfordshire squire."

"I thought you were not a Cockney."

"Lord forbid! Does that information entitle me to any in return?"

"I don't know; but, whether or no, my name is Rhoda Gale."

"Have another plate, Miss Gale?"

"Thanks."

He ordered another.

"I am proud of your confiding your name to me, Miss Gale; but, to tell the truth, what I wanted to know is how a young lady of your talent and education could be so badly off as you must be. It is not impertinent curiosity."

The young lady reflected a moment. "Sir," said she, "I don't think it is; and I would not much mind telling you. Of course I studied you before I came here. Even hunger would not make me sit in a tavern beside a fool, or a snob, or—(with a faint blush)—a libertine. But to tell one's own story, that is so egotistical, for one thing."

"Oh, it is never egotistical to oblige."

"Now that is sophistical. Then, again, I am afraid I could not tell it to you without crying, because you seem rather a manly man, and some of it might revolt you, and you might sympathise right out, and then I should break down."

"No matter: do us both good."

"Yes, but before the waiters and people! See how they are staring at us already!"

"We will have another go in at the beef, and then adjourn to the garden for your narrative."

"No; as much garden as you like, but no more beef. I have eaten one sirloin, I reckon. Will you give me one cup of black tea without sugar or milk?"

Vizard gave the order.

She seemed to think some explanation necessary, though he did not.

"One cup of tea agrees with my brain and nerves," said she. "It steadies them. That is a matter of individual experience. I should not prescribe it to others any the more for that."

Vizard sat wondering at the girl. He said to himself, "What is she? a *lusus naturæ?*"

When the tea came, and she had sipped a little, she perked up wonderfully. Said she, "Oh, the magic effect of food eaten judiciously! Now I am a lioness, and do not fear the future. Yes, I will tell you my story—and, if you think you are going to hear a love-story, you will be finely disappointed. No, *sir*," said she, with rising fervour and heightened colour, "you will hear a story the public is deeply interested in

and does not know it; ay, a story, that will certainly be referred to with wonder and shame whenever civilisation shall become a reality, and law cease to be a tool of injustice and monopoly." She paused a moment: then said, a little doggedly, as one used to encounter prejudice, "I am a medical student; a would-be doctor."

"Ah!"

"And so well qualified by genuine gifts, by study from my infancy, by zeal, quick senses, and cultivated judgment, that, were all the leading London physicians examined to-morrow by qualified persons at the same board as myself, most of those worthy practitioners — not all, mind you—would cut an indifferent figure in modern science compared with me, whom you have had to rescue from starvation—because I am a woman."

Her eye flashed. But she moderated herself, and said, "That is the outline; and it is a grievance. Now grievances are bores. You can escape this one before it is too late."

"If it lies with me, I demand the minutest details," said Vizard, warmly.

"You shall have them; and true to the letter."

Vizard settled the small account, and adjourned, with his companion, to the garden. She walked by his side, with her face sometimes thoughtfully bent on the ground, and sometimes confronting him with ardour, and told him a true story, the simplicity of which I shall try not to spoil with any vulgar arts of fiction.

A LITTLE NARRATIVE OF DRY FACTS TOLD TO A WOMAN-HATER, BY A WOMAN.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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